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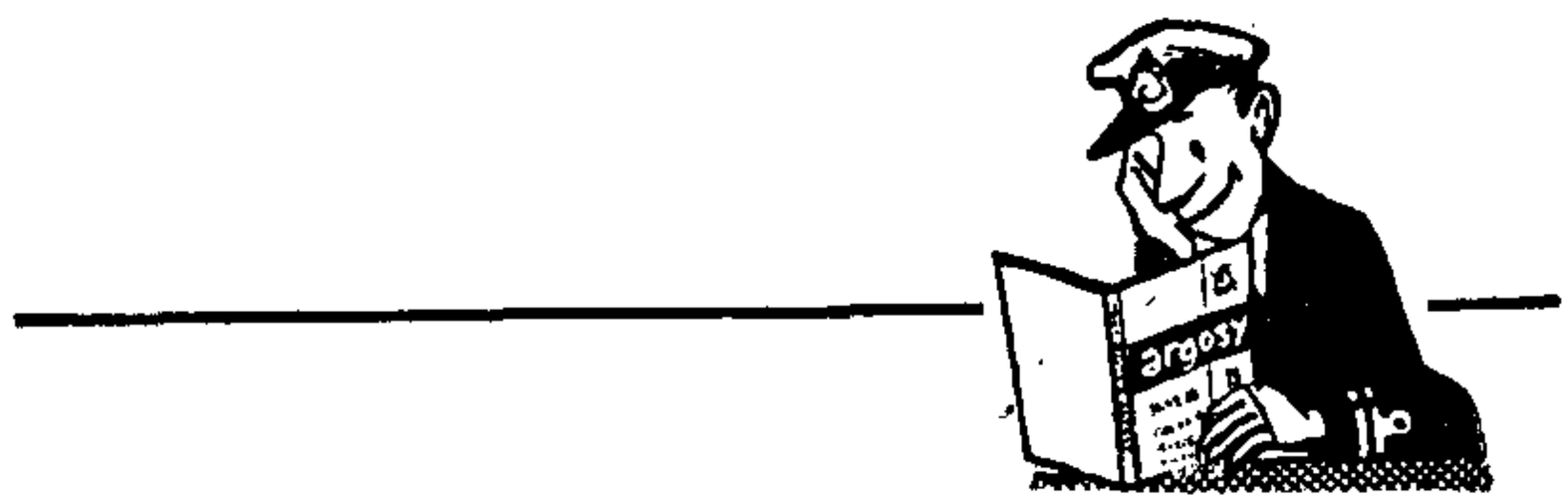

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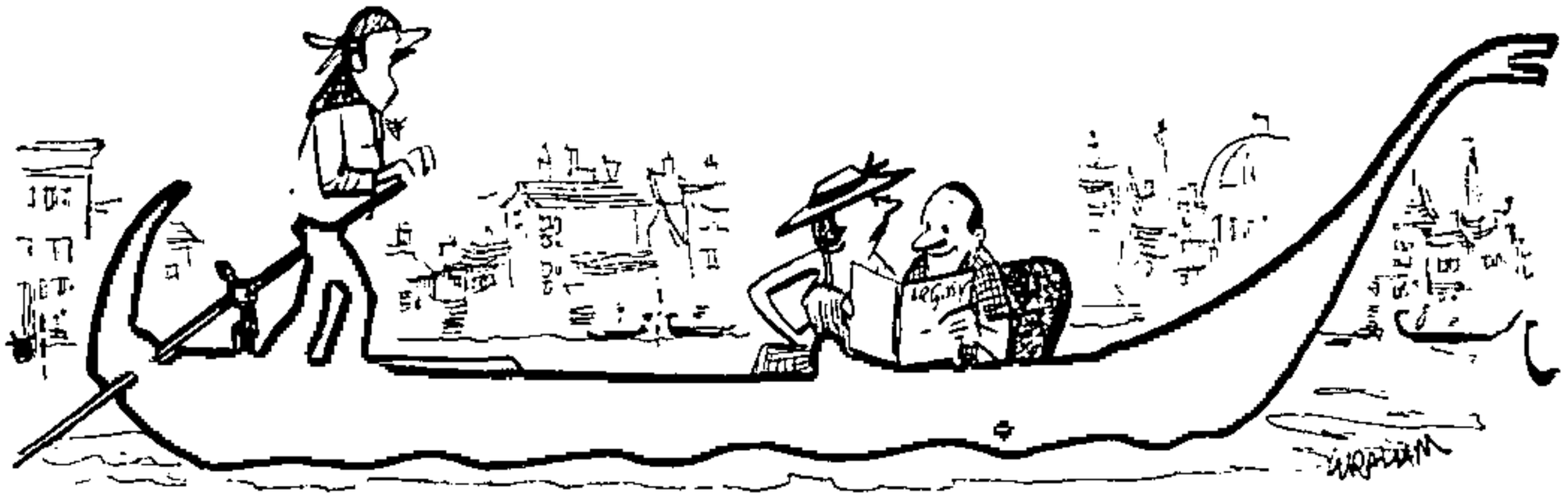

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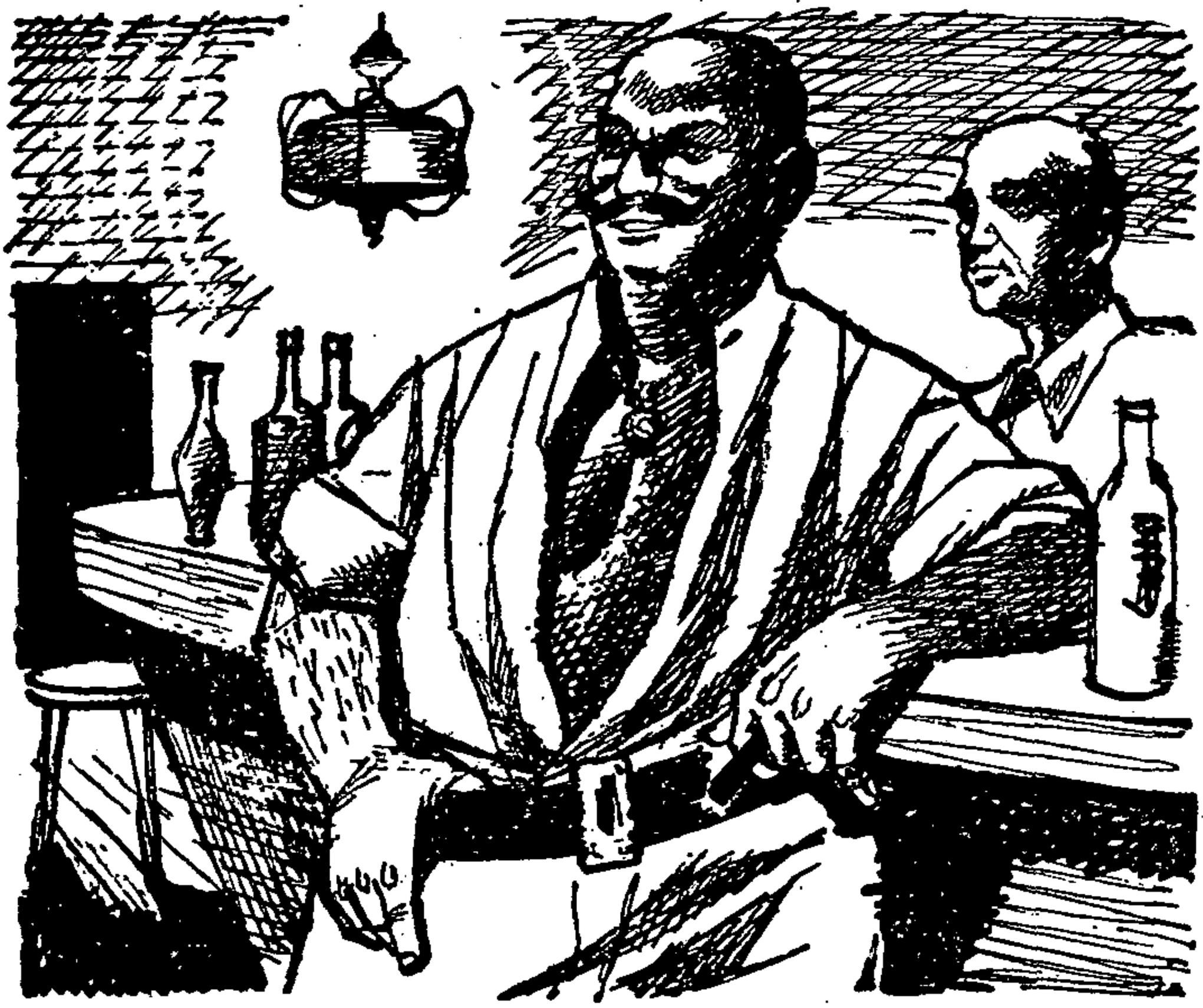
Song of

By HARRY MARK PETRAKIS

YOU would not have thought, to look at him, that my friend Apollo was a subject for tragedy. He had none of the great mournfulness of countenance that must have marked Macbeth and Oedipus. But calamity is not the divine right of kings alone.

Apollo played the guitar in the tavern of Ali Pasha, where I worked as a bartender. He was in his middle thirties and of average height. He appeared taller because he had a lean and hard body and moved with the grace of a flamenco dancer. He had strong white teeth that flashed in a warm and engaging smile.

In the evening, when the tables in the tavern filled with patrons, he would ascend the low platform in a corner of the large room. He played bright Greek mountain dances that made any feet but my swollen and aching ones itch to leap into the air. He



Desire

played bucolic love songs of Zakynthos and Thessaly, and old-country island melodies that I remembered hearing as a boy.

Late at night as the smoke grew thicker and the mastiha ran freely down eager throats, a line of wild old men would rise to dance. They would circle and weave among the tables in a brisk Hassapiko or a martial Tsamiko that provided the leaders a chance for precarious leaps and hazardous jumps.

It was on an evening near the end of summer that Daphne first came to the tavern. She entered alone some time after midnight wearing a raincoat and a strip of silk scarf across her head that she untied as she approached the bar. Her hair as it tumbled free was the rich black shade of fine Calamata olives.

" I would like to see the boss," she said in a husky voice.

I walked to the door at the end of the bar and called for Ali Pasha. In a moment he came lumbering out of the office. He had a great, gross body, the disposition of a hangman and a range of facial expression from bitter to bleak. He also fancied himself a

bit of a rake and sported a handlebar moustache with curled and pomaded tips that he pulled fiercely when he grew excited.

"I'm looking for a job," the girl said.

"Only men serve the tables," Ali Pasha said brusquely. "The kitchen staff are men as well."

She swept her hair back impatiently with one hand, exposing a long jewelled ear-ring glittering on her ear. "Do you take me for a kitchen maid?" she asked. "I am a singer."

"A singer," Ali Pasha said, and a rude leer settled round his mouth. "Where have you sung?"

"Plenty of places," she said. "My last job was at George Spartan's in Cleveland and before that the Hellas in Detroit. Business improves wherever I sing."

He gave her a long, appraising look. She was a handsome young woman with a certain sensual boldness that made me uneasy. He motioned her to a stool. "Sit there," he said. "I will listen to you in a minute."

He walked towards the platform where Apollo sat. I wiped the bar briskly with a cloth. "Would you like a mastiha?" I asked.

"Thanks."

I poured her a glass, which she raised to her lips and drank as swiftly as any man.

"Is that guitar player any good?" she asked.

"He plays a beautiful guitar," I said firmly. "When he plays the songs of the old country, he returns old men like me to our mountains and our islands."

"If he could just make you forget the brandy and cigar stink of places like this," she said with a taunting little laugh, "he would still be the best I have ever heard."

In another moment Ali Pasha returned with Apollo. "This is Apollo Gerakis," he said to the girl. "He plays the guitar for me." He motioned to Apollo. "This girl is a singer."

"Daphne," she said. "Daphne Callistos."

"Daphne," I said. "Apollo and Daphne." The old legend came to my mind.

"What's that?" Ali Pasha asked.

"Nothing," I said. There was no use explaining anything classical to him.

"I suppose we can use a singer," Apollo said as he looked carefully at the girl. "Can you sing the songs of Pontus and Epirus and Crete?"

"I know them all," Daphne said. "The lullabies and the love songs and the laments."

"One thing you should know," Apollo said. "The salary here is next to nothing. I exist on tips which are tossed into a box

while I play. We would have to share what tips we get."

"I've worked that way before," Daphne said.

"Never mind salary and tips," Ali Pasha said. "Let's hear her sing first."

She gave him a final amused look and walked with Apollo towards the platform, removing her raincoat on the way. She was sheathed in a black dress that fitted her body tightly. Ali Pasha uttered a low, hoarse curse.

When they reached the platform, they stood talking a moment and then Daphne moved alone into the beam of muted light. Apollo struck the first chords of a lament and the men at the tables quieted slowly.

A lament is a morose and melancholy song, and Apollo played them with feeling. But as she sang I had the strange sensation I was hearing a quality of despair I had never heard before. Her voice, haunting and mournful, led us down the path where the stream of woe pours into the river of lamentation. At the tables men stirred, and a wind of pleased muttering swept the room.

When she finished the lament, Apollo changed the tempo to the lilting melody of a festive mountain dance.

Daphne placed her hands on her hips and threw back her head, and her voice, suddenly bawdy and vibrant, assaulted the room. At one of the tables near the bar an old man sleeping off too much drink raised his head like a startled bird. Her ardour paid homage to the woodland spirits of fertility and abandon. In such a way must the wild nymphs have sung in the festivals of Dionysus before the satyrs playing their pipés made of reeds.

When she finished, a storm of applause rose from the roomful of men. She walked with a careless insolence past the tables, and many called to her and blew her kisses. She came back to the bar, and Ali Pasha showed his teeth in hungry admiration. "You sing all right," he said grudgingly. "The truth is, I don't really need a singer. It is an expense I might not be able to afford."

In another moment Apollo joined them. "You are very good," he said.

"The boss doesn't think I'm good enough," she laughed.

"Never mind the lousy salary," Apollo said. "I think you will fill the box."

"Out of which you'll take your half," Ali Pasha snarled. He spoke to the girl with a crooked attempt at a winning smile. "If you want to work, you can start tomorrow night at eight."

She nodded calmly as if the outcome had never been in doubt. She turned to leave, and Ali Pasha spoke slyly. "A good-looking woman like you will be a pleasure to have around."

She looked at him as if her eyes were knives severing little

hunks of his flesh and waved good night to the rest of us as she pulled on her raincoat. We watched her as she walked to the door. Ali Pasha tugged fiercely and silently at the tips of his moustache, and walked back into the office.

I dimmed the lights in a signal to the customers that we were preparing to close. Apollo sat down on a stool at the bar.

"I wonder where she comes from?" he said slowly.

"She is from disaster," I said, "and on her way to catastrophe." Then, because he did not seem to be listening, I reached across the bar and shook his arm. "Forget her," I said. "Don't get involved with her."

"She is not all that brass she puts on," he said. "When she sings, she sets dreams to weeping. I remembered that it has been a long and lonely summer. I am tired of playing my songs alone." He pushed off the stool. "Hurry and clean up, Janco," he said. "I'll buy you a cup of coffee on the way home."

He walked towards the platform for his coat and guitar. I snapped off the lights above the bar. The waiters were beginning to clear the tables, and customers were moving in reluctant groups to the door. An old man who had been sleeping on his arms was disturbed by the clatter and moaned hoarsely.

"No more auditions, tonight," I said in a vexed voice. "We don't need another singer."

After Daphne started to sing in the tavern, business became much better almost at once. Ali Pasha, merciless in his greed, set up additional tables that barely left room for the cursing waiters to squeeze by.

When Daphne sang an unhappy ballad or a lament, she had the old men weeping for the grand days of their lost youth. When she sang a dancing song from Macedonia and suggestively rendered the lyrics of a shy man and his bold wife, the old men went wild with delight. When the greybeards finally rose to dance, they exhausted themselves to demonstrate their unflagging virility, and leapt off the floor like drunken and festive roosters.

Ali Pasha couldn't take his eyes off her. When she sang, he gripped the tips of his moustache in anguish. She held him off by a fury of blazing defiance in the same way she held off the countless other males who stampeded round her at the end of each evening. She provoked my grudging admiration in the ruthless way she cut them down.

But Apollo confused her. Against him she raised defences that were not needed. He pursued her with a gentleness that was a source of wonder to her. Slowly, almost against her will, she must have felt herself drawn to him. Perhaps he stirred in her a

memory long lost in the tide of dark days, a dream of fair love . . .

There was a day in the beginning of October when rain fell until evening and left a brief scent of freshened earth across the city. Late in the evening Apollo came looking for Daphne and seemed distressed. A while after that, one of the waiters relieved me at the bar, and I slipped out of the kitchen door to smoke a cigar and get some fresh air.

Daphne called my name from the shadows.

"What are you doing out here?" I asked. "Apollo is looking for you."

"Let him look," she said defiantly. "He is as bad as all the rest."

"Is he?" I asked quietly. I sat down on a crate and with a sigh raised my burning feet to rest on another.

For a long moment she did not answer. I drew a cigar from my pocket and struck a match, and in the brief flare of light I saw her pale and weary face.

"Perhaps he is," she said. "Perhaps he isn't. But there are times when I am sick and tired of all men."

"The fate of a handsome woman," I said.

She laughed mockingly in the darkness. "I only feel at ease with you, Janco," she said. "Why is that?"

"My arteries and my bad feet," I said wryly. "You sense correctly they have immobilised me for any pursuit."

She fell silent again. Above us the rain clouds had disappeared and the stars glittered.

"Wasn't Apollo the name of a god?" she said.

"He was the god of life and light," I said. "And he loved Daphne above all other women."

"I knew the story as a child," she said quietly. "I don't remember now except that it was sad."

"Daphne was the daughter of Peneus, the river god," I said. "Apollo was seized with love for her, but she yearned to keep her freedom. Many lovers sought her, but she spurned them all.

"Apollo loved her and longed to have her as his own. She sensed he was different from all the others, but she was afraid. She belonged to the unspoilt woods and to the untamed rivers. He followed her relentlessly and told her not to flee from him as a lamb flies before the wolf or a dove before the hawk. He was the god of song and the lyre and played a mighty melody of love."

"A guitar player," she said softly. "Playing a sweet and sad guitar."

"She tried not to listen to him," I said. "She was innocent of the meaning of love. But he would not let her alone. Her strength began to fail, and she called upon her father to aid her, to

change her form, which had brought her into danger. Scarcely had she finished pleading when a stiffness seized all her limbs. Her hair became leaves, her arms became branches, her feet stuck fast in the ground as roots. Apollo touched the stem of the tree and felt her flesh tremble under the new bark. And he wept for his lost love. 'Since you cannot be mine,' he sang, 'I will wear you for my crown. I will decorate with you my harp and my lyre. My songs will make you immortal.'"

When I finished, she moved restlessly from the shadows and for an instant stood in the strip of light before the door.

"The legend does not tell the truth," she said, and there was a black and bitter edge to her words. "Do not believe she fled because she was innocent and cared nothing for him. She fled because she had known many men and did not deserve the kind of love he offered. She knew if they loved each other they might both be destroyed."

"It is only a story that belongs to the past," I said wearily. "A bit of foolishness for children and old men."

She went in the door, and after a moment I followed . . .

It was not long after that night that Apollo and Daphne became lovers. I do not know why she changed her mind. Perhaps even the daughters of gods have moments of mortal yearning. And the legend does not tell us whether in that unhappy chase the two of them did not pause for a moment together, perhaps in an hour of twilight when the darkening of the woods made them feel keenly the burden of being alone.

No one told me they became lovers, but I knew by the radiance that came from them when they were together. Sometimes when they had finished their last song after midnight they came to the bar, and I served them little glasses of wine.

"Is she not beautiful, Janco?" he said, and there was the intimacy of possession in the way his fingers touched her hair. She accepted his touch, and I saw their faces stir with the soft wind of each other's desire.

"Is he not mad?" she said, and laughed her husky laugh, animated and deepened by affection.

"He is a guitar player," I smiled. "You are a singer of sad love songs. This gives you both a head start on madness."

"When I was a boy," Apollo said softly, looking at Daphne, "I had dreams of conquering cities and of ruling men. Dreams of loving countless fair and dark women." He paused, and the words came shaken from his throat. "I have found them all," he said. "In my love I have conquered cities and rule all other men. In my love I have spanned the oceans and circled the earth. In my love I possess countless fair and dark women."

"He is mad," Daphne said, and in her eyes there was a fierce longing to believe him. "He is trying to make me as mad as he is."

"The mad are sane," I said, "and the sane are mad. Only love can harness both."

She raised her glass of wine and watched me as she spoke. "Legends are stories that belong to the past," she said, and a shadow swept her cheeks. "Is that not true, Janco?"

"That is true," I said quickly. "A bit of foolishness for children and old men."

She accepted my assurance recklessly and held tightly to Apollo's hand.

"Then I drink to the future," she said fiercely. "A future that will make stories of its own."

"I drink to that," I said, and spoke from my heart.

I am sure the ugly trouble began with Ali Pasha. When he could not have Daphne, his soul festered in rancour and wished to destroy that which he had been denied. He whispered in low malevolent tones to the waiters, falling silent when I came near. They followed his lead, and added their own venom.

Rumours, suspicions and whispers about Daphne and her past spread furiously through the tavern. There were sidelong smirks and muted laughter when Apollo passed the tables.

When he understood something of what was going on, he twisted in frustration and rage, but could find no adversary visible. I think he wished mainly to protect and defend her, and yet the baleful laughter nourished disorder. He knew that the shadows of her past concealed much he did not relish, and he began to brood over what could not be forgotten.

I fought to help him where I could and yet protected Ali Pasha as well. I knew that if Apollo suspected the origin of the vile whispering there would be violence. Ali Pasha kept a loaded gun in the top drawer of his desk and was coward enough to use it if he were attacked.

Under the taunt of these aggravations Apollo one night flung a patron violently from the platform when he sought to slip folded dollar bills into a pocket of Daphne's dress. There was a roar of catcalls and jeers. The man who had been shoved, shrieked for the police. Ali Pasha hurried him into his office to conciliate him. A moment later Apollo came raging to the bar, followed by Daphne.

"He meant nothing," Daphne pleaded to calm him. "That was a good tip, and he meant no harm."

"Let him choke on his good tip!" Apollo said. "I should

have smashed him. I saw him paw you. I should have smashed the pig!" He twisted on the stool, all the weeks of provocation and helplessness fused into explosive direction. "I have to sit there and watch them hour after hour," he said. "Drunken pigs who think their grimy dollar entitles them to any liberty."

"Listen, please," Daphne said in a low, soothing voice. "I can tell when one is a bad apple. I would slap that kind down myself. Mostly they are old roosters with cut claws showing off for applause from their friends. They mean no harm."

"They harm me!" Apollo said. "I do not want the woman I love pawed by pigs!"

Her eyes began to flash fire of their own. "You forget one thing," she said. "I am a singer of bawdy songs in a tavern. In Cleveland and Detroit I earned my tips this way. This is the way I earn my bread."

"To hell with that," Apollo said, and his cheeks shook off heat. "To hell with earning your bread that way."

"Don't tell me how to earn my bread," she said, and the words came bitten from between her teeth. "From the time I was ten no one cared whether I had bread at all. I have made my own way and asked no favours and earned my bread. Don't tell me now what is right. Don't sit in judgment like a god over my life."

"What kind of woman are you?" he asked savagely. "Not to mind being pawed by a hundred men!"

She stepped back as if he had struck her. Then, without another word, she turned quickly and almost ran to the door. He made a sudden frantic gesture with his hand to call her back and then changed his mind.

"Go after her," I said quietly. "You were not fair, Apollo. She cares a great deal for you. Don't let her grieve alone." I looked uneasily at the closed door to the office. "Ali Pasha will be out in a minute."

"To hell with him," Apollo said. But the circles of anger round his mouth loosened slightly, and then he slipped off the stool and started after Daphne.

A moment later Ali Pasha came out of the office embracing the patron whose outrage seemed to have softened. "Give this gentleman two bottles of mastiha." Ali Pasha's voice dripped unctuous tones. "Drink them, sir, with my compliments."

After the mollified rooster walked away clutching his bottles, Ali Pasha quickly dropped the mask of civility. "Mark that down," he snarled. "Those two bottles come out of the guitar player's wages. Charge him the retail price." He glared round the room. "Where is he and the girl?"

"Out for the air," I said.

"You tell them when they get back," he said, spitting the words from beneath his flaring moustache. "You tell lover boy that one more outburst like that and he and his prize paramour can both clear out." The sweat glistened on his swarthy face. "Who the devil does he think he is to protect that tart?"

"He is only a man in love," I said slowly. "A poor man goaded and tormented by dirty rumours and vicious lies spread by animals who only feel at home in the dark."

The blood left his face as if I had struck him.

November came, and the hours of daylight grew shorter. Dusk and dark advanced as the winter nights closed down. For the first time that I could remember I dreaded the coming of winter. The bleakness of the earth mirrored a desolation gathering in myself. I tried to justify this as the ominous premonition of an old man who did not have long to live, but I knew it was really because of my grief and despair for Apollo and Daphne.

The ugly whispering and mocking laughter had slowly faded away. Even Ali Pasha tired of the brutal game. But the baleful harm had been done.

Apollo could not forgive or forget the measure of mockery Daphne and he had endured. He tasted a bitter cup of brooding that would not let him rest. Each night that Daphne sang he imagined in fury that the room secreted her former lovers, and he held himself tense and ready for violence. She sought to soothe and reassure him, but he was beyond reason. When they could bear no more, they raged loudly at each other and did not care who heard. At other times they fought in a dreadful silence.

In those dissembled moments when they sought to tear from the fabric of the nightmare a pattern for survival, they drew me with frenzied gaiety into their plans.

"Can you see me tending house?" she asked, and laughed a quick, shrill laugh. "Janco, can you honestly see me in an apron?"

"I see you clearly," Apollo said. "I will come home weary in the evening—"

"And Daphne will greet you with song and a dance," I said, smiling.

"She will greet me with a tableful of food," he cried. "Roast chicken and white pilaf and salad garnished with Calamata olives and ripe mizithra cheese."

"Where will this splendid meal come from?" Daphne asked.

"You will cook it," Apollo said. "As my mother cooked for my father."

"Fine," Daphne said mirthfully. "I will cook for you as your mother cooked for your father. Fine."

"You will cook it," Apollo spoke with confidence. "And we will invite Janco to dinner several nights a week."

"I will work hard to learn," Daphne said. "You might both be surprised at how good a cook I become."

"I think you will become a fine cook," I cried. "And when you achieve this mastery, Apollo will create a ballad about your prowess in the kitchen."

There were those other bleak and furious moments when he stormed past the bar into the office, and she followed as if she were tied to his flesh. I could hear their voices through the thin panels of wood.

"You are a madman," she told him. "You are blind and mad."

"I see enough," his voice trembled. "The way that sailor looked at you. The things you promised when you sang to him."

"It is only you I care about," she cried. "Don't you understand that?"

"You knew him from before," he said.

"I have never seen him before tonight."

"You lie!" he said savagely.

"I'm not lying!" she said. "I'm not lying!"

"There were other men," he said. "You cannot deny there were many other men."

"What can I say about that now?" she said, and a terrible pain rang in her words. "What can I do about that now?"

There was a day in the beginning of December when I got to the tavern very early in the afternoon and found it deserted except for Daphne on a stool at the bar. "You are hours early," I said, smiling. "Are you so attached to this place?"

"I am leaving, Janco," she said quietly. "I came to say goodbye."

I could not answer. A sadness settled upon me. After a while I said, "Where will you go?"

"I don't know," she said. "I don't care."

"He will follow you," I said. "He will not let you go."

She did not answer or move for a long moment. Then she slipped off the stool and turned and stared gravely across the shadowed room with the chairs piled upon the empty wooden tables. "These places are all alike," she said bitterly. "When you have sung in one you have sung in all. They are graveyards one moment and circuses the next moment. They all have the smell of damp cellars that never see the sun."

"If you went away for a little while," I said. "For just a little while and then came back."

"That would do no good," she said. "You know that."

She walked a few steps, and her shadow rose and swept along the wall behind her as if seeking a place to rest.

"In the world outside," she said, "there are countless people who love and marry and bear children. They live one day like the next. I have never envied them before." A stricken wonder came into her voice. "I try to remember the moment for me when there was no turning back. I try to remember the moment such a dream was lost to me for ever. I cannot." She shook her head wearily. "All my life seems a long bawdy song."

She came slowly to where I stood and kissed me. Her lips were cold against my cheek. "I could not say good-bye to him," she said. "I say good-bye to you instead."

"Will you leave him a letter?" I asked. "A message?"

"Everything has been done." She shook her head. "Everything has been said." She walked towards the door of the office. "I will fix my face and go," she said. "The first waiters may come soon."

She stood for a moment in the doorway. Her face, suddenly stained with tears, had imperfections, but no face is faultless, and if grief and despair make any face ugly, still she glittered in that moment with some strange beauty. "So the legend is right in the end," she said. "Daphne and Apollo are lost to each other."

"Not really lost," I said. "They have loved each other. He will never forget her. He will wear her love for his crown and will decorate with her memory his harp and his lyre."

"You are a foolish old man," she said softly. "Life to you is a song and a harp and stories that belong to the past."

She closed the door behind her. I turned wearily to prepare for the evening, trying to ease my distress in the movements of habit, the opening of bottles and the wiping of glasses. A few moments later I heard the sound of a shot.

A cold wind from the grave swept my body, and I went quickly through the door to the office. She was sitting in an armchair with her head limply to one side and the tumbled waves of her lovely hair almost hiding her face. There was a small stain of blood on her breast above her heart, and at her feet the gun of Ali Pasha from his drawer.

I made my cross and closed my eyes for a moment and cried out then, a terrible cry from the marrow of my bone, for Daphne and Apollo and for the earth which had lost their love.

The winter seems to last for ever. March is still a cold and dreary month. Sometimes the snow falls softly during the night, and in the morning the earth is frozen and buried. I walk

shivering to work, and when I breathe, a quivering mist rises like smoke from my mouth.

The tavern is not the same. Ali Pasha carries a dark burden of guilt and drinks savagely and alone. The wild old men still dance, but without the vigour they had before, as if they are only sad and futile ghosts. Apollo still plays the guitar, but he is changed as well.

Many come to hear him play in the evening. I swear there are tears on his strings, and his songs are great white stars that set dreams to weeping. And as I stand behind the bar late at night and listen, it seems to me that I am back in the mountains of the old country under Homer's glittering moon. Parnassus stands behind dark mountains. The olive groves and the ruins of columns lie among the age-old trees. The sea and Piræus are white with light. Under the stars the shepherds sleep beside their flocks.

When I have to sit down because my ankles are swollen and my feet hurt, I return unwillingly to reality and know I am only an old man. A foolish old man to whom life is a song and a harp and a legend that will never die.

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EGG JARPING

On Easter Sunday morning we " jarped " our eggs. " Jarping " meant knocking your hard-boiled egg against someone else's and the one whose shell cracked first was the loser. I don't remember rolling my Easter egg, but I believe many people did roll them on Cleadon Hills and Penshaw Hill, or in any steeply-inclined street: hoops were trundled at the same time.

There were both iron and wooden hoops. The iron ones, which made a sweet singing sound as they slipped through the crook of the iron guard, were for boys only. They used to bounce alarmingly over cobbles and kerbs, and would fall with a very tuneful clatter on the flagstones. The wooden hoops were very dull; they were guided by a cane " guard," and only girls played with these.

Easter was a curious festival in those days—half-pagan, half-Christian, half-sorrowful, half-happy—and it was lapped in the delicious aromas of chocolate wrappings and boiled eggs and oranges and new clothes. It could be wet and sunny, windy and fair, but it was always the time for new things—new caps and shoes, new friends, new loves, new aspirations.

JAMES KIRKUP, *The Only Child*

FLIGHT 591

The only answer was
the fitful crackle of atmospherics

BY R. J. J. THEAKSTON

AS he switched off his cabin light, the chief officer of the *Cornwallis* looked at his clock. Two minutes to four. He pushed aside the door curtain, walked down the accommodation alleyway and out on to the wing of the bridge.

A strong cold wind hit him with rude force, bringing with it a trace of rain or spray, he wasn't sure which. Probably both, he thought. An occasional star showed through an almost overcast sky, while ahead the yellow glow of the foremast light arc-ed and dipped to the movement of the ship.

The officer forced his way to the fore end of the bridge and stood for a moment, his hands gripping the curved steel of the dodger, looking ahead, seeing only the vague outline of the ship through the darkness and the white of the breaking waves. He halfheartedly estimated the strength and direction of the wind before walking through the wheelhouse and into the chart-room.

The second officer was leaning over the chart-table writing up the log book. He straightened as the chief officer entered. "Good morning, sir."

"Good morning." The mate could never bring himself to talk more than was polite or necessary so early in the morning. He poured himself a mug of tea from the tray which was jammed into one corner of the settee, added condensed milk and sugar, steadying himself against the roll of the ship.

The second officer passed on the details of the watch. "Course is 190°, no error on the gyro. Nothing in sight. The wind seems to be about south-west, force 6. There's been a little rain, not much." He made a grab for the log book which was sliding across the table. "The Old Man says to call him if she begins shipping any heavy seas."

"Is the fourth up here?"

"Yes, he's out in the wheelhouse. I'll go on rounds now."

The mate grunted. The hot tea was doing him good; he picked up a sandwich and began to eat it as he read the captain's night orders. Then he had a look at the latest weather report:

a depression to the south was passing away, another approaching. This part of the Pacific always seems the same in September, he thought. It'd be good to reach New Zealand and have some peace from this infernal rolling and pitching.

When the second officer returned the mate was in the wheelhouse talking to the fourth. The pale green glow from the gyro repeater compass picked out the dim reflection from their faces.

"All correct, sir," the second officer said.

"Thank you. Any signs of life from the passengers?"

"A couple of cabin lights are on, but there was no one about." He turned to go. "Good night," he said.

"Good night." There was a gust of cold wind as the wheelhouse door opened and then closed with a bang.

It was shortly before five that the junior radio officer burst into the wheelhouse from the chart-room. He stopped abruptly as the darkness blinded him. "Is the officer of the watch here?" he asked in a voice that was shaking with excitement.

"Yes, here, Sparks," said the mate, moving away from the window where he had been standing. He took the radio officer by the shoulder and led him into the chart-room. "What's bitten you?"

"I'm in touch with an aircraft in distress. They want to know our position." He was wide-eyed and pale with excitement.

The chief officer felt his stomach contract in a sharp spasm. Damn, he thought, it would happen in weather like this. "You get back to the wireless-room," he said. "I'll bring you in our position in a moment. Have you called Bernie?" he asked, as the boy turned to go. Bernie was the senior radio officer; they would need him.

"No; I'll do it now." He hurried out, slamming the chart-room door behind him.

The chief officer grabbed his nautical tables and the scrap-paper pad. He worked from the star fix he'd obtained the night before and as he worked he noticed with amusement that in his haste he was using the chart pencil, a thing he never let his juniors do. It was always like this with simple routine calculations, he thought; no matter how urgent it was, one half of the brain was always thinking about something else; but a small mistake here could be fatal.

"Mr. Evans," he called to the fourth officer, "come and check this position, please."

Evans came in, screwing up his eyes at the sudden light. He checked rapidly through the figures. As he finished, he straightened. "Yes, that's right, sir," he said.

"There's an aircraft in distress," explained the mate. "I'm

just going to the wireless-room to see if she's anywhere near."

The wireless-room backed on to the chart-room. The mate put his piece of paper in front of the radio officer who was seated at his receiver, listening. "Here's our 0500 position, Sparks," he said. "Have they given you theirs yet?"

Without taking his eyes from the tuning dial the young radio officer pushed his message pad across. In a hasty scrawl was written:

Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, aircraft Blue Pacific Airways, Flight 591, *left Nandi* 0100 *for Auckland, position latitude* 31° 21′ *south, longitude* 176° 08′ *east, course* 190°, *losing height and will soon be forced to ditch. Any ships in vicinity please indicate.*

The mate copied down the position and hurried out. He heard the whir of the transmitter as the radio officer spoke into the radio-telephone. "*Cornwallis* calling Flight 591, *Cornwallis* calling Flight 591 . . ."

Measured on the chart the two positions were about a hundred miles apart. Both ship and aircraft were on the way from Fiji to Auckland, with the ship one hundred miles ahead. The mate knew the ship's position was correct to within a radius of three miles, five at the most, but how accurate was the aircraft's position, he wondered. However, if all went well the aircraft should be near soon . . .

The fourth mate was leaning over the chart-table watching. "Call the Old Man," the mate told him, "and get the bridge boy to call all hands at once—and that includes the stewards, cooks, the doctor, everyone."

In the wireless-room the senior radio officer was sitting in pyjamas before the receiver, listening. Behind him stood his junior nervously smoking a cigarette.

Abruptly the loudspeaker crackled into life. An American voice said, "Flight 591 to *Cornwallis*, Flight 591 to *Cornwallis*. Are you receiving me?"

The radio officer spoke quietly into his handset. "*Cornwallis* to Flight 591. Reading you loud and clear. Go ahead, please."

It was the first time the ship had heard the aircraft since the original distress signal. They had received no reply to their message giving the ship's position.

The voice came back again distorted and unrecognisable, but in the middle of a sentence it cleared. ". . . two engines, cannot maintain height. Thirty-seven passengers aboard. Should just about make your position. Over."

Bernie's voice was reassuring as he spoke into the phone. The last part of the message had been received, he said, but would

they repeat the beginning? His only answer was the fitful crackle of atmospherics; the aircraft was silent.

Bernie's face was white and drawn. With the back of his hand he wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "Perhaps he's staying tuned in to us," he said. The transmitter whined into life as he pressed the handset control. "*Cornwallis* to Flight 591. I shall transmit a D/F signal to you on 550 kilocycles for you to home on the ship. Still listening for you on the distress frequency."

"It's an odd thing," he mused, as he replaced the phone, "but no one else appears to have heard this distress signal."

In the chart-room the captain, in slippers and dressing-gown, stood looking at the chart as the chief officer explained the situation. "What are his chances of making a decent landing in the sea that's running?" he asked.

"He'll be very lucky to ditch without smashing up the aircraft, sir."

The captain was silent for a moment. "He's got to find us first, too," he said slowly. He drummed with his fingertips on the chart. "We must do all we possibly can. Have all the deck and floodlights switched on, and every cargo light you can find on and facing upwards. I'll heave the ship to.

"Tell the chief steward to have the main lounge cleared to receive survivors, to collect all the blankets he can muster, to have hot tea ready. Tell the doctor to be standing by and to have the hospital prepared. You will supervise the manning of the two motor lifeboats."

He looked at the clock: it showed nine minutes past five. "And God help them," he added.

As the mate left the bridge he heard the telegraphs jangle and felt the speed of the ship slacken. The rolling began to ease and no longer did the vessel shudder and jar as she ploughed her stem into the heavy sea. It was a relief to have a break from that soul-destroying rolling, he thought. He personally went to see the heads of departments to give them their instructions; he felt it was better than explaining to them, half asleep over the phone.

The ship was soon brilliant with lights blazing up at the dark racing clouds. The mate could see more breaks in the sky than when he came on watch. From the air the ship should prove to be an excellent beacon.

He was standing on the boat deck watching the sailors lower the two boats until they were swung out and tight on their tricing wires. When the boats were ready the sailors climbed in

awkward in their oilskins and blue-and-yellow lifejackets, while an engineer checked over each motor.

The mate knew it was going to be a dangerous journey for them all. He looked at the second and third officers who were standing by quietly talking to each other, waiting to take command of the two boats, and wondered if he should go instead. It was a standing order of the captain's that if an emergency boat was sent away he, the chief officer, must not go; nevertheless he still felt a nagging conviction that he should. "If either of you feel you'd rather not go . . ." he began tentatively to them. Both officers grinned and shook their heads.

"You're not going to steal our glory that easily," said the second.

When he got back to the bridge he found the fourth standing on the open wing, a pair of binoculars slung round his neck. "The Old Man's in the wireless-room, sir," he said.

"Thanks. Seen anything?" It was a stupid question . . . if the fourth officer had seen anything he would have said so . . . it showed that he was more on edge than he had thought.

"Not yet, sir."

In the wireless-room the Old Man was sitting on the edge of the desk pulling fiercely on a cigarette. The mate noticed he had found time to put on a sweater and a pair of trousers. "I've been trying to get in touch with them again to tell them we are going to begin firing red distress rockets at one-minute intervals, starting at 1720 G.M.T.," he said.

The mate looked at the clock, it showed five-eighteen and they were twelve hours ahead of G.M.T. In two minutes' time.

"They can't be far away now, providing they're still airborne," he said. "They should be able to see those rockets for miles."

"Exactly." The captain stopped as the sound of the American voice suddenly came booming through the loudspeaker.

"Flight 591 to *Cornwallis*. No sign of you yet. We are down to fifteen hundred feet and can stay airborne for perhaps another eight minutes." The voice clicked off abruptly.

"I wish the poor devils would let us know if they have received our messages," complained the captain. "Eight minutes left. We'd better go outside."

The bridge was now lit up by the blaze of lights throughout the ship. The decks were lined with crew and passengers all looking up and waiting. "If he doesn't see this, his navigation can't be too good," said the captain; "although heaven knows, *I* wouldn't-like to try to navigate fighting for height and your life forfeit for the slightest mistake." He turned to the fourth officer. "Put the radar on, please, Mr. Evans."

As Evans went into the wheelhouse the junior radio officer appeared. "They've been through again, sir. They're down to one thousand feet and the pilot says if he doesn't see us within the next few minutes, they haven't a hope."

"Thank you, Sparks." The captain stood clasping and unclasping his hands behind his back.

A rocket soared into the air to burst above the clouds in a crimson glow. They watched it in silence until the light gradually faded.

"Did you hear anything just then?" asked the captain abruptly.

"No, sir." The mate shook his head.

"Thought I heard a plane—go and see if they've heard anything more over the wireless."

As the mate walked into the wireless-room he noticed the clock on the bulkhead in front of him. Nearly five-twenty-two. That left the stricken aircraft about four minutes of life .... And there was still no sign of it.

Suddenly, urgent and very loud, a cracked voice spoke through the loudspeaker. "We can't see you, *Cornwallis*, we can't see you. Height now eight hundred feet." The words came slowly and with difficulty. "We should have been over—wait! There's a red flare!" Life and hope surged into the voice. "It must be one of your rockets—yes! You're right ahead of us now, *Cornwallis*. We can see you now!"

The mate dashed through the chart-room on to the bridge wing. "They can see us, sir," he shouted.

"It can only be just in time." The captain showed little of the emotion he must have been feeling. "They'll be coming in from the north, won't they?"

"Yes, sir—I believe I can hear them." The two men stood for a moment listening eagerly. Unmistakable now above the noise of the wind came the beat of aero engines and suddenly, from astern, they could see the plane's landing lights flashing on and off, approaching rapidly. The aircraft passed by the slowly-moving ship at about two hundred feet, and losing height. They watched the lights sink until, suddenly, they disappeared in a veil of dimly visible white spume.

The *Cornwallis* steamed rapidly towards the crash. There should have been no difficulty in fixing the position of the aircraft—a radar bearing and distance would be accurate to within several yards.

"Is it showing on the radar, Mr. Evans?" asked the captain.

"No, sir." The fourth had his face pressed against the rubber face-piece of the radar screen. "It didn't give any echo at all." A telephone shrilled and he moved to answer it. "From the

wireless-room, sir," he called. "They say they have received nothing further from the aircraft."

"Thank you." The captain rang the engine telegraphs to Stop. "We must be about there by now," he said to the mate.

"I think so, sir." He was scanning the dark expanse of sea through binoculars. "But I can't see anything . . ." As the plane had crashed he had taken a compass bearing to guide the ship to the spot if nothing had shown on their radar. It had been hard to judge exactly how far ahead the aircraft had been when it hit the water, but, as the captain had said, they must be close now. Apart from her normal steaming lights, the ship was once more in darkness, allowing the officers a better chance of seeing anything that might be visible.

"Send the boats away now," ordered the captain, "the leeward one first and then the other as I turn to give it a lee. Tell them— No, they know what to do without my saying anything."

"Aye, aye, sir." The mate looked at his watch. Five-twenty-nine.

Six minutes later both boats were away; he watched their lights bobbing up and down, at times entirely disappearing in the trough of the waves. Considering the sea that was running, they had done well. He realised for the first time that it was now beginning to get light; the white-painted sides of the boats were faintly visible against the dark grey of the sea. But of the aircraft there was no sign.

For three hours the two boats and the ship searched the area. They found nothing, not even a piece of wreckage or a trace of fuel on the water.

"It's incredible," exclaimed the captain as he ordered the fourth officer to signal the boats to return. "It's unbelievable that an aircraft of that size, with thirty-seven passengers and several crew, could disappear within a couple of miles of us without *any* trace." He looked at the mate.

"I know, sir." The mate was still feeling the terrible impotence of the moment when he had first realised that it was all over; that they were spectators, powerless to help.

Half an hour later the ship was steaming at full speed on her original course to Auckland with both lifeboats secured once more. The mate was returning to his cabin when the captain called him up to the bridge. Passing him a radio message pad, he said, "Read this, please, and tell me if you think there's anything I've missed."

The mate took the pad; it read: *To ZLD Auckland Radio. At* 1656 *G.M.T. received distress message from Blue Pacific Airways,*

Flight 591, *leaving Nandi* 0100 *local time for Auckland, with* 37 *passengers aboard and unable to maintain height. Aircraft ditched within sight of vessel but in darkness at* 1725 *G.M.T. latitude* 33° 06′ *south, longitude* 175° 43′ *east. No trace of survivors or wreckage after* 3 *hour search. Master.*

"That seems to cover everything, sir." The mate was thinking that for once he wasn't at all looking forward to making port.

Late that evening the *Cornwallis* berthed at Auckland.

The captain had asked the chief officer to his cabin, and together they met the local manager for Blue Pacific Airways and an officer who represented the New Zealand air-sea rescue service. They introduced themselves and sat down.

The mate, who was watching Mr. Hardie, the airline manager, closely, was surprised to see how easily he appeared to be taking the blow his company had suffered.

It was Hardie who began. "I should like to thank you, Captain, and the ship's company for the trouble you have taken over this matter," he said. He paused for a moment before continuing. "Did the pilot of this unfortunate aircraft give any reason why he had to ditch?" he asked. "We fly the latest four-engined aircraft, you know, and they are able to remain airborne on two engines."

"No," said the captain, "they gave no reason, but I gathered that his remaining two engines weren't behaving properly."

"I see. And you actually *saw* this aircraft?"

"We saw her navigation and landing lights—it was still dark at the time."

"And you saw her ditch?"

"Yes, not more than two miles from us."

Hardie leaned forward in his chair. "I'm asking you these questions particularly, Captain—" the corners of his mouth twitched slightly—"because no aircraft of Blue Pacific or any other airline left Nandi at the time or even on the day which you have reported."

The captain flushed. "Are you trying to tell me that the whole ship's company and a hundred passengers imagined this?" he snapped.

"Captain—" the other visitor spoke for the first time—"did you see any signs of fuel on the water where the aircraft crashed?"

"No. As far as we could see there was nothing." He turned in his chair, picked up his desk telephone and dialled a number. "Sparks," he said when a voice answered, "the captain here. Bring me your log book."

Putting up the phone he turned to Hardie. "Were there any aircraft en route to New Zealand from Noumea or Tahiti?"

"No, we checked on that. And anyway, this plane would be hopelessly overdue by now."

There was a knock on the door and Bernie entered with his log book. "Thank you, Sparks," said the captain, taking it. "These gentlemen appear to think that that aircraft existed only in our imagination. Too many farewell parties, I suppose."

"Only facts go in there, sir," said the radio officer indignantly.

The captain read out all the entries from the first distress call received at 1656 G.M.T. When he had finished he looked at Hardie. "Is there a Flight 591?" he asked.

"Yes. It leaves Nandi at 2200 local time, not 0100."

"The man we heard speaking was an American. Do you know of any American pilots in Blue Pacific Airways?"

"Yes," said Hardie, "we have one, a Captain Turnlow, but he is not due here for a while. He lives in Fiji and is on leave, I understand."

"When is the next Flight 591 due to leave Nandi?" pursued the captain.

"At 2200 last. Local time, that is." He looked at his wrist-watch. "It should have left three hours ago. I expect they will have the confirmatory telegram at the office."

"And have you been informed how many passengers are being carried on this flight?"

"Forty-one," answered Hardie. "But I don't quite see what you're getting at . . . Unless you believe there's some connection between the aircraft you say you saw crash this—or rather, as it is now, yesterday—morning, and the one due to leave tonight." He looked round at the other men for support. "That's fantastic!"

For a moment there was silence in the cabin. Hardie shifted uncomfortably in his chair. "Anyway," he went on, "it doesn't add up. Our flight leaves at 2200, not 0100; there are forty-one passengers, not thirty-seven; and our only American pilot won't be on the flight."

The captain stood up. "You're right, I suppose," he said wearily. "Let me get you a drink." The mate watched sympathetically as he moved over to his cocktail cabinet. Poor old boy, he thought, he looks years older, and no wonder.

There was a knock on the door. It was the night steward. "There's a young lady to see a Mr. Hardie, sir," he said. "She says she's the night duty hostess for Blue Pacific Airways."

"Bring her in."

The hostess was an attractive girl dressed in the uniform of Blue Pacific Airways. She smiled at the captain, walked demurely across to Hardie, and handed him a buff post office envelope.

"This will be from Nandi confirming Flight 591," said the manager, ripping it open. He pulled out the sheet of paper.

"Flight 591," he read aloud, "leaving airport at 0100 due to last-minute sickness of Captain Morgan who will be relieved by Captain Turnlow. Family Taylor cancelled so now thirty-seven passengers. Blue Pacific Airways."

Hardie's voice broke as he came to the end. He looked wildly at his watch and then at the men in the cabin.

"It's too late to stop that flight," he said hoarsely. "It has already left."

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Shaggy Dog Stories

"I told you it would go to his head."

TROUBLE IN THE CITY

He was struggling, fighting his way through the crowd, shouting, "Stop him"

BY VICTOR CANNING

BARUCH looked down at his wife and she smiled back at him. She was young still and so was he, and he was thinking of the days of their courtship, of the evenings when he would wait beneath the olives on the outskirts of the village and she would come as the sun was setting to sit on the well wall with him—tall and beautiful, the wings of her dark hair escaping from under her headscarf, her dark eyes bright with love, and her body swaying like a young sapling. Her smile now was brave, but he knew that behind it lay pain. The thought made him stir with impotent anger, a fear which was less for herself than for the child she carried, their first child.

She said, "What did the doctor say?"

He reached down and took her thin hand into his own hard brown workman's fingers. "That the child is well within you. There is no need to worry. Your sickness is one which can be cured with these new drugs."

"New drugs? But they will cost money."

"I can find it." He was thinking of the doctor, a man who allowed himself no pity when he treated the poor for fear of being swamped by it; a hard, competent professional man who had bluntly said, "Unless she has these drugs she will die when the child comes. Though the child may live."

"Where will you find the money?" she asked.

He smiled and stretched out his hands. "A man can work."

But when he had left her and gone down to the one room which lay below the bedroom, he stood rubbing his eyes, wondering how he should begin. A man could work—but it would take a year's work to buy these drugs. And the doctor would give him no credit. His wife had to have these drugs now, within the next few days.

For a moment he had a picture of himself alone, his wife gone—the blackness of the thought made his face tighten with

anger. Work could not help him because he had no time. He must go to Adan who lived on the outskirts of the city. But it was no good going to Adan with empty hands. Adan was a good man, but he, too, was like the doctor, without pity, because in a country so poor and so disturbed with riots pity solved nothing if a man wished to stay alive.

Baruch looked round the room. He had to sell whatever he had of value. And there was very little. They lived on the edge of starvation and their possessions were few. He went round the room collecting those things which he thought might fetch money with Adan: two worn silver spoons which his wife had brought with her on her marriage, a carved wooden box with an ebony top, a silk sheet worked in tiny threads of purple and gold which had been a wedding present, and from the floor near the door the large dyer's bowl in which they kept the kindling twigs for starting their fire. The bowl had been his father's—a dyer—and he could remember as a boy watching his father dipping the lengths of cloth into it, raising and lowering them, and the dye dripping—red, green, and yellow—on his arms.

He put the pathetic collection on the rough table and wrapped them in an old shirt of his own, and he knew that by themselves they were not enough. These new drugs were expensive.

He picked up the bundle and went out. There was only one thing to do, and it was the kind of thing which was always happening to people like himself. You worked hard and planned to make life a little easier, but somehow you never got a chance to catch up with yourself.

Most of the week he was away, peddling cheap goods in the mountain villages, his wares loaded on the back of his donkey. Twice the donkey had foaled and the colt had died. But the third time the colt had lived. With two beasts of burden he could increase his trade, make life a little easier. And now, when he had an almost full-grown colt and looked forward to travelling in the mountains, carrying twice as much to sell, able to increase his business, he would have to sell the colt to Adan. But it had to be done.

With these few household pieces and the colt, Adan would give him enough money to buy the drugs which his wife needed.

He went out from the gloom of the house. The fierce sunlight slashed his eyes and a dry wind whipped up the dust into his face. He went across the sun-bitten square to the stables behind the inn where he kept his donkey in return for work he did for the innkeeper. People greeted him as he crossed the square, and he acknowledged them absentmindedly. He was well liked and

normally would stop and chat, but now his thoughts were full of his wife.

He went round behind the inn to the small enclosure where the donkey and the colt were kept. The innkeeper's boy was sitting on the top rail of the fence, whittling at a stick with his knife. He nodded to Baruch and jumped down.

From the centre of the enclosure the old pack donkey looked up and, seeing Baruch, came slowly across and thrust its muzzle into his caressing hand. But Baruch was scarcely aware of the animal's actions. There was no sign of the colt in the enclosure.

"Where's the colt?" he asked the boy.

"But you sent for it, master."

"What?" Baruch caught the boy by the shoulder and drew him close.

"You sent for it. About two hours ago. Two men came and asked for it."

"What men, and what did they say?" Panic struck at Baruch. In a poor country nothing was safe, and if his colt had gone . . .

"I didn't know them. But they said, 'The Master needs the colt.' So I let them take it, and they went away towards the city—"

But Baruch was no longer with the boy. He had turned and with his bundle over his shoulder was striding back to the square, heading for the road to the city. Anger and panic misted his brain. The boy had been tricked. The country was full of rogues.

He had to get quickly to the city if he wished to see his colt again. It would be taken into the market, sold, and be out of the place within a few hours. But nobody was going to steal his colt. He could recognise it anywhere. Let him just catch a glimpse of it.

He half ran, half walked, jog-trotting down the dusty length of road, the sweat pouring off him, and he had always in his mind the picture of his wife lying in the hot bedroom, her body wasting and yet growing with child—his wife who had come each evening through the purpling dusk to the well where they would talk, and plan their life together, his wife, the great pearl of his life . . .

There were quite a few people on the road and some of them called to him, but he hurried past, a man obsessed. He didn't often go to the city, only when he needed to see Adan and stock up with fresh wares. There was always trouble in the city, political riots, and the soldiers smashing through the angry crowds, clearing the streets. A poor man with a living to make

kept away from that kind of thing. Often there were demonstrations, speeches, appeals, and always trouble. Usually he did not go into the centre of the city, for Adan's house was on the outskirts. But now he pressed on, passing Adan's house, for he had thought for only one thing, to get to the market quickly. A thief would take the colt there right away.

When he reached the city centre he was covered with dust, and his body was so wet with sweat that his clothes clung to him, and his mouth was parched with thirst. In the narrow streets he had to slow his pace to that of the crowds. Something was afoot again today, the crowd surging forward, shouting and waving their arms, but he let the noise and confusion sweep over him, uncomprehending because his mind held only the thought of his colt. Then as he neared the market which was close to the temple, he was caught up in a great crowd, close-packed so that he could scarcely make any progress.

And then suddenly he saw his colt. Baruch was a tall man, and over the heads of the crowd he could see a small procession passing towards the temple, and at the head of the procession

NEXT MONTH IN

argosy

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THE BEST SHORT STORIES

ON SALE 2/6
MAY 10

was a man riding his colt! He recognised it at once, and even in the moment of recognition he felt surprise, for the colt was unbroken, had never had a weight on its back before, and yet here it ambled in the stir of the noisy crowd carrying its rider without so much as a buck or a kicking up of its heels!

The next moment Baruch was struggling towards the colt, fighting his way through the packed crowd and shouting, "Stop him! Stop, thief! That's my colt!"

But he might as well have shouted against a gale of wind. Nobody heard him, nobody heeded him, and the crowd made a wall against which he struggled in vain. Just for one brief second Baruch thought that the man on the colt must have heard him, for he turned his head and looked across the crowd towards him, and again Baruch had a moment of surprise for it was a friendly, calm face, an honest face—and yet the man rode his colt.

All he could do now was to try to follow, to go with the crowd, but as they neared the temple he lost sight of the head of the procession and was forced aside and then jammed into the angle of a house wall where the crowd, coming to a halt, held him. All he could see was the heads of his neighbours and all he could hear was the roar of voices and he could not tell whether the voices were angry or joyful.

Something was happening up there by the temple, but he could see nothing, and he could think only of his colt and his wife and the drugs; despair made him sob with frustration as he struggled to fight his way from the wall angle.

And then the soldiers came, clearing the streets as he had seen them do a hundred times before. No pity, no gentleness, just sweeping down on the crowd in an armoured, unbreakable line, and the crowd surged, turned, and broke, streaming away before the soldiers.

When Baruch turned and tried to go with them, to escape the indiscriminate striking and violence of the oncoming soldiers, he tripped and fell and the crowd went over him and his hand lost its grip on his bundle of household possessions. Feet smashed against him and he lay on the ground, feeling his body pounded by the passage of the panic-stung crowd.

And then the crowd passed and he saw his bundle lying close to him. He grabbed at it and began to rise to his knees. But he got no farther. The soldiers were on him, spread wide across the street, flaying everything in front of them. A sergeant bore down on him, shouting and swearing, and he saw the man's hand rise high, saw the flash of steel in the hard sunlight. Instinctively Baruch threw up his hands to protect his head and he felt the

great shock of the blow strike against the metal bowl inside his bundle.

When he came to, he was in Adan's house. The bearded merchant was sitting behind his table and Baruch was lying on a couch, while one of Adan's men held a drinking cup to his lips.

Adan said, " After the riot one of my men found you, recognised you, and brought you here, Baruch. What were you doing in the centre of the city? "

Baruch struggled to a sitting position. His head cleared slowly. On the table in front of Adan he saw his few household possessions miserably laid out. Suddenly the memory of the colt and his wife surged bitterly back into his mind.

" My wife is ill, Adan. She must have expensive new drugs to save her, to make her well for the coming of our child. Those things in front of you I would have sold to you for the money. But I knew they would not be enough. My new colt also I would have brought to you, but it was stolen and I came to the city to look for it. Now it is too late . . ."

Adan nodded gravely. He knew Baruch. He knew what must be in his mind. Slowly he reached out and took the old dyeing bowl into his hands. There was a great gash across it where the soldier's sword had struck it. The metal, stained with so many colours, almost black with years of use, was dented and knocked badly out of shape.

" This bowl," said Adan, " was your father's? "

" Yes, Adan. My father's and his father's before him, and before that it was in our family when all the men were soldiers. It came, I believe, from Egypt."

" It did indeed," said Adan. " And you have no need to worry about your colt. Whoever took it did you a great service. Look, see where the sword struck it—" he handed the bowl to Baruch.

The great gash shone brightly.

" This," said Adan, " is no ordinary metal dyeing bowl. It is gold, pure gold—looted, maybe, by one of your soldier ancestors from Egypt. Give praise, Baruch, that your colt was taken and so you came into the city centre, for this bowl will save your wife and child and make you a rich man."

Baruch looked down at the bowl in his hands, and suddenly his heart was light and full of gladness, and he could see his wife, dark and beautiful, sitting under the olive tree behind his house, holding in her arms their first child.

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When Saki (H. H. Munro) was a small boy, his mother died and his father left him in the care of an aunt in Barnstaple while he went away to Burma.

From this aunt and her ungovernable temper and what Saki's sister called "her primitive disposition," Saki learnt at first hand the twin evils of hatred and fear. They were to dominate much of his finest writing; for while tinkling Edwardian teacups, cucumber sandwiches, and a brilliant wit pervade many of his sunnier stories, it is for his mastery of tragedy and the macabre that we finally remember him.

Easter Egg

By SAKI

IT was distinctly hard lines for Lady Barbara, who came of good fighting stock, and was one of the bravest women of her generation, that her son should be so undisguisedly a coward.

Whatever good qualities Lester Slaggby may have possessed, and he was in some respects charming, courage could certainly never be imputed to him. As a child he had suffered from childish timidity, as a boy from unboyish funk, and as a youth he had exchanged unreasoning fears for others which were more formidable from the fact of having a carefully-thought-out basis.

He was frankly afraid of animals, nervous with firearms, and never crossed the Channel without mentally comparing the numerical proportion of lifebelts to passengers. On horseback he seemed to require as many hands as a Hindu god, at least four for clutching the reins, and two more for patting the horse soothingly on the neck. Lady Barbara no longer pretended not to see her son's prevailing weakness; with her usual courage she faced the knowledge of it squarely and, mother-like, loved him none the less.

Continental travel, anywhere away from the great tourist tracks, was a favoured hobby with Lady Barbara, and Lester joined her as often as possible. Eastertide usually found her at Knobaltheim, an upland township in one of those small princedoms that make inconspicuous freckles on the map of Central Europe.

A long-standing acquaintanceship with the reigning family made her a personage of due importance in the eyes of her old friend the Burgomaster, and she was anxiously consulted by that worthy on the momentous occasion when the Prince made known his intention of coming in person to open a sanatorium outside the town.

All the usual items in a programme of welcome, some of them fatuous and commonplace, others quaint and charming, had been arranged for, but the Burgomaster hoped that the resourceful English lady might have something new and tasteful to suggest in the way of loyal greeting.

The Prince was known to the outside world, if at all, as an old-fashioned reactionary, combating modern progress, as it were, with a wooden sword; to his own people he was known as a kindly old gentleman with a certain endearing stateliness which had nothing of stand-offishness about it. Knobaltheim was anxious to do its best.

Lady Barbara discussed the matter with Lester and one or two acquaintances in her little hotel, but ideas were difficult to come by.

"Might I suggest something to the gnädige Frau?" asked a sallow high-cheekboned lady to whom the Englishwoman had spoken once or twice, and whom she had set down in her mind as probably a Southern Slav.

"Might I suggest something for the Reception Fest?" she went on, with a certain shy eagerness. "Our little child here, our baby, we will dress him in a little white coat, with small wings, as an Easter angel, and he will carry a large white Easter egg, and inside shall be a basket of plover eggs, of which the Prince is so fond, and he shall give it to his Highness as Easter offering. It is so pretty an idea; we have seen it done once in Styria."

Lady Barbara looked dubiously at the proposed Easter angel, a fair, wooden-faced child of about four years old. She had noticed it the day before in the hotel, and wondered how such a towheaded child could belong to such a dark-visaged couple as the woman and her husband; probably, she thought, an adopted baby, especially as the couple were not young.

"Of course gnädige Frau will escort the little child up to the Prince," pursued the woman, "but he will be quite good, and do as he is told."

"We haf some pluffers' eggs shall come fresh from Wien," said the husband.

The small child and Lady Barbara seemed equally unenthusiastic about the pretty idea; Lester was openly discouraging; but when the Burgomaster heard of it he was enchanted. The

combination of sentiment and plovers' eggs appealed strongly to his Teutonic mind.

On the eventful day the Easter angel, really quite prettily and quaintly dressed, was a centre of kindly interest to the gala crowd marshalled to receive his Highness. The mother was unobtrusive and less fussy than most parents would have been in the circumstances, merely stipulating that she should place the Easter egg herself in the arms that had been carefully schooled how to hold the precious burden.

Then Lady Barbara moved forward, the child marching stolidly and with grim determination at her side. It had been promised cakes and sweeties galore if it gave the egg well and truly to the kind old gentleman who was waiting to receive it.

Lester had tried to convey to it privately that horrible smackings would attend any failure in its share of the proceedings, but it is doubtful if his German caused more than an immediate distress. Lady Barbara had thoughtfully provided herself with an emergency supply of chocolate sweetmeats; children may sometimes be time-servers, but they do not encourage long accounts.

As they approached nearer to the princely daïs Lady Barbara stood discreetly aside, and the stolid-faced infant walked forward alone, with staggering but steadfast gait, encouraged by a murmur of elderly approval.

Lester, standing in the front row of the onlookers, turned to scan the crowd for the beaming faces of the happy parents. In a sideroad which led to the railway station he saw a cab; entering the cab with every appearance of furtive haste were the dark-visaged couple who had been so plausibly eager for the "pretty idea."

The sharpened instinct of cowardice lit up the situation to him in one swift flash. The blood roared and surged to his head as though thousands of floodgates had been opened in his veins and arteries, and his brain was the common sluice in which all the torrents met. He saw nothing but a blur around him. Then the blood ebbed away in quick waves, till his very heart seemed drained and empty, and he stood nervelessly, helplessly, dumbly watching the child, bearing its accursed burden with slow, relentless steps nearer and nearer to the group that waited sheep-like to receive him.

A fascinated curiosity compelled Lester to turn his head towards the fugitives; the cab had started at hot pace in the direction of the station.

The next moment Lester was running, running faster than any of those present had ever seen a man run, and—he was not running away. For that stray fraction of his life some unwonted impulse

beset him, some hint of the stock he had come from, and he ran unflinchingly towards danger.

He stooped and clutched at the Easter egg as one tries to scoop up the ball in Rugby football. What he meant to do with it he had not considered; the thing was to get it. But the child had been promised cakes and sweetmeats if it safely gave the egg into the hands of the kindly old gentleman; it uttered no scream, but it held to its charge with limpet grip.

Lester sank to his knees, tugging savagely at the tightly clasped burden, and angry cries rose from the scandalised onlookers. A questioning, threatening ring formed round him, then shrank back in recoil as he shrieked out one hideous word. Lady Barbara heard the word and saw the crowd race away like scattered sheep, saw the Prince forcibly hustled away by his attendants; also she saw her son lying prone in an agony of overmastering terror, his spasm of daring shattered by the child's unexpected resistance, still clutching frantically, as though for safety, at that white-satin gewgaw, unable to crawl even from its deadly neighbourhood, able only to scream and scream and scream.

In her brain she was dimly conscious of balancing, or striving to balance, the abject shame which had him now in thrall against the one compelling act of courage which had flung him grandly and madly on to the point of danger. It was only for the fraction of a minute that she stood watching the two entangled figures, the infant with its woodenly obstinate face and body tense with dogged resistance, and the boy limp and already nearly dead with a terror that almost stifled his screams; and over them the long gala streamers flapping gaily in the sunshine.

She never forgot the scene; but then, it was the last she ever saw.

Lady Barbara carries her scarred face with its sightless eyes as bravely as ever in the world, but at Eastertide her friends are careful to keep from her ears any mention of the children's Easter symbol.

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 136

Across. 1, *Bare living.* 6, *Bred.* 10, *Locus.* 11, *Repertory.* 12, *Edgewise.* 13, *Aisle.* 15, *Aliases.* 17, *Schemes.* 19, *Balloon.* 21, *Coroner.* 22, *Radar.* 24, *Champion.* 27, *Londoners.* 28, *Osier.* 29, *Riot.* 30, *Press gangs.*

Down. 1, *Bill.* 2, *Rock-drill.* 3, *Lisle.* 4, *Virgins.* 5, *Nephews.* 7, *Rooks.* 8, *Dry measure.* 9, *Preacher.* 14, *Cat-burglar.* 16, *Showroom.* 18, *Mongolian.* 20, *Nuclear.* 21, *Classes.* 23, *Dingo* 25, *Prong.* 26, *Iris.*

An Argosy "first"
by a new writer

THE BOY WITH THE BOOK

BY INA ROBERTS

THE tenement block was situated not far from the river. To the people who rented houses in the mean little streets all around it, it was known, rather contemptuously, as The Flats. It was a massive, compactly-square doughnut, the hole in the middle being the courtyard. The grey stone of the tiered balconies was enlivened here and there by gay splashes of washing, and the red-brown colour of the brick waited resignedly to attain the grey-black camouflage that would set it in harmony with the rest of the district.

The small boy going in through the huge archway that was the main entrance from the road, did not belong to the flats. His name was Joe Stebbings, and he was on his way to join the lending library which was buried behind a door that led off from the courtyard.

An uncouth-looking boy. Thin, redhaired, narrow-eyed. A disintegrating navy blue pullover over a torn, dirty shirt. Scuffed shoes, drooping socks. A curious air of defensive alertness, almost slyness.

The printed form, with his father's carefully forged signature sprawled across it, was hidden down the front of his jersey. He had thought it better not to risk putting it into a pocket. The pocket with the fairly safe hole was sticky with melted peppermint.

Would the librarian know that it was not really his father's signature? "They" had a way of knowing things. She might say—she might say— Joe, halfway down the winding stone steps, paused fearfully, thinking what she might say.

What would he do if what she said was, "We don't lend books here to boys who can't be trusted. Deceitful boys who copy their father's handwriting"?

He would not do anything of course, except go away. Perhaps it was better not to risk it? But how else join the library? They wouldn't let you join without a form. No good asking his father

to sign it, still less his mother. Some boys could. He tried to imagine a boy being able to ask his father or his mother to sign a library form. He groped for the form and examined it doubtfully. In his mind, the signature had become amateurish, obviously his work, but he stared at it now, the speculative expression on his small freckled face relaxing. It was good. She would not know.

He made his way across the tenement courtyard, ignoring a group of children who were leaning on the rail of a first-floor balcony. "Ginger!" they yelled. "Hey, Ginger!"

He walked with his hands in his pockets, looking at the ground. He hated his hair. Nobody else he knew had bright red hair that curled like a girl's. And it got him into fights.

His step quickened with anticipation as he approached the faded green door of the library, and he took his hands out of his pockets. His face, as he handed over the form, was cautious, and he kept his eyes fixed unblinkingly on the librarian's face.

It was something of a surprise to him when she handed over a ticket and indicated that he was free to go and choose a book. For a moment he did not understand. He had been working out ways and means of bluffing, in case she did happen to be suspicious about the form.

Books for boys. He stood, his face wrinkled with worry for a moment, looking round the quiet shabby room, and then his feet touched the floor lightly as he moved and his eyes widened. All these, he thought, and not costing nothing!

Grubby, sparrow-thin hands reaching, the tip of a tongue licking a bottom lip. Joe loved books. Words were a hypnotising magic to him. Here, merely for the reaching, were books about ships, books about railways, books about treasure islands, books about boys . . .

Furious activity, and then silence. *Great Expectations*, by Charles Dickens. He stood, leaning on his elbow against a shelf, unaware of anything except the words of the book in his hands. The library clock ticked calmly on. A few other children prowled around, and two of them were ordered out for making a noise. Joe did not notice. Soon he was the only child left. And too absorbed even to sit down.

At five to eight the librarian looked up and frowned slightly. "Closing in a few minutes, dear," she said.

Joe came back to reality with a start. He looked at the clock and his eyes registered horror. His father would kill him. In less time than it took the librarian to glance up as she date-stamped his book, he was out of the library and running.

His feet kept sharp rhythm with his frightened elbows as he

hurried along. Supposing his father and mother were both sitting there all dressed up to go out, and just waiting for him to come back? The picture of it danced and jiggled in his mind.

His father would get—oh so slowly—to his feet. His voice would be very soft. His mother would purse up her mouth, take a lipstick out of her bag perhaps, and sit there looking into her compact mirror while his father took off his belt.

At best he might get only a passing dig or slap from his mother, and a stream of abuse from both. Unless his mother happened to be in one of her tempers. And then she could be worse than his father. At least his father only hit him with the belt, and was calm about it, except that his mouth twisted. His mother would take hold of a handful of his red hair and bang his head against a wall, clawing and punching at his face at the same time.

It was her screaming that he was afraid of most. She would seem to sort of go mad, and her face, thrust close to his, horribly distorted, the eyeballs bulging. Her voice, screaming and screaming at him, "You bastard! You redheaded little bastard!"

It was nearly dark now, and heavy fog was rolling in from the river. The boy ran, twisting and turning through narrow streets, risking a main road in a quick dash, panting into a dark evil-smelling alley. And here a sudden horrified thought skidded him to a stop.

The book. He had not considered any way in which to get it into the house. His mind had planned no further than the printed form and the librarian.

His mother hated books. She would not have anybody sitting around on their fat lazy behinds reading books in her house. People who read books wanted something better to do, and they must be a bit soft in the head. His father was fairly indifferent. But either of them was capable of putting it at the back of the fire. Although not necessarily in anger.

He did not know why it was that they hated everything that he liked. They could not bear to see him sitting with a school sketch-pad, drawing pictures to amuse his younger brothers. They knew, as if by instinct, that he enjoyed the sound of good music over the wireless, and resentfully they switched it off.

It was partly this strangeness, this difference in him that made them so hard on him, he knew that. They would have liked him better had he been keener on football than books, boxing-gloves than sketching-pads. In their eyes he was not normal. In his own eyes he was not normal either. He felt himself to be a freak, a misfit. His mother was always voicing her intention to knock it out of him before he was much older. His father, on the other hand, was always trying to knock some sense into him.

Joe's feet dragged on through the alley and over a piece of waste ground, picking at pieces of rubble as his mind invented and discarded ways and means of getting the book past them. He paused for a moment to try carrying it under his jersey, clasped to his side, but ruefully took it out and tucked his jersey back into his pants again. It was too big to escape notice in that way. His mother's eyes missed nothing. Perhaps if he sidled in with it held behind his back? But if one of them got up to hit him, the book would fall to the floor.

He opened his own back door and, knowing the clatter of the rusty latch that could be heard in the house, held the tongue of it while he lowered it gently back into place. His feet skilfully avoided an upturned dustbin lid filled with ashes, that was lying on the ground. The lavatory door was swinging creakily on its rusty hinge, and he tiptoed past it and crept up to the window.

He could hear voices in the kitchen and the wireless, but the curtains were drawn too close. He stood uncertainly in the narrow back yard, worrying about the book, and half inclined to risk climbing on to the windowsill to peep through the small gap at the top of the curtains. An idea came to him. He might get away with it if he left it hidden in the back kitchen for the time being.

The back kitchen window was in darkness. If he left the book on his way in—perhaps behind the boiler—there would be little risk of it being discovered tonight, and he could take it to school with him tomorrow morning. But somebody might come through the connecting door between the living-room and the back kitchen and switch on the light before he had time to hide it properly . . .

His eyes full of sudden decision, he moved to open the back kitchen door. But at the same moment his ultra-alert ears picked up the sound of the knob of the living-room door rattling slightly as somebody's hand turned it, and his own hand reacted with the speed of his ears, falling back in mid gesture. For a second he stood utterly frozen, knowing that if the door facing him should open, he was lost. He heard somebody clearing his throat. His father. He heard the clinking of glass. He relaxed.

That still left the problem of the book. Well, he would just have to leave it outside here somewhere.

He looked around the shabby square of paving. There was a narrow strip of barren soil against one brick wall, facing the lavatory. In the corner near the window there was a huge and rusty mangle covered with a cracked tarpaulin. Various odds and ends of wood and pieces of rubbish lying about. At the bottom of the yard, the dustbin and the coal.

The coal! His heart jumped with sudden relief. That was it—leave it among the coal. If anybody brought in any more coal tonight it would be his job to get it.

He moved swiftly to the bottom of the yard, wrinkling his nose against the familiar stench. A sickly sour smell of cats, decayed rubbish, the lavatory, and the back kitchen where the cooking was done. The coal was in an angle of the wall. Delicately he balanced the book in a corner, on top of it.

His hand on the latch of the kitchen door again, he took his usual deep breath before entering. He reckoned that it helped to take a deep breath. Sometimes he stood outside in the alley taking lots of deep breaths before he would go in, if he could hear that there was a row going on. He was ashamed of this and would not have let anybody know of it. It showed he was really a coward.

His father was pouring out beer into glasses, in the back kitchen. As Joe went in, he turned round swiftly, his thin hollow-cheeked face twisting at the mouth in the way that Joe knew it would.

Fortunately he had a glass in one hand and a bottle of beer in the other. But Joe paused, not daring to go straight into the living-room without pausing to find out what punishment was in store for him.

"Where the bloody hell have you been till this time?" asked his father. His voice was a soft hiss, and at the sound of it Joe's heart suddenly lightened with intuitive knowledge. There must be company in the other room. He stared at his father dumbly. It was better not to answer back.

"Get out of my sight. Get in there before I decide to kick your teeth in."

Thankfully, Joe went on into the living-room.

Uncle Arthur and his wife were the company. Not really relations at all, but given the status of such by long association. Uncle Arthur was a thin shabby little man with yellowed teeth and a dog-like way of looking at people. He had a loud voice and he made a joke of every other remark he made. He always laughed uproariously at his own jokes, but for some reason—perhaps because they sensed that he was perpetually ill at ease—other people did not. Joe liked him, and paid him the compliment of always smiling gravely at his jokes.

Uncle Arthur's wife was fat and blonde. She irritated Joe, because every time he caught her eye, she smiled at him. He felt vaguely that her smile understood nothing at all.

She smiled at him now, and he avoided her, looking instead at Uncle Arthur and, out of the corner of his eye, his mother. The

smile that he flashed at Uncle Arthur now was something so vivid and unexpected that that gentleman looked both gratified and astonished, and began to fumble in his pocket for a sixpence.

Joe was not interested in the sixpence. He was feeling a silent prayer of gratitude because of the lightening of the usual atmosphere.

This atmosphere, although he never thought about it consciously, was something of which he was always aware. It was the reason for the hint of slyness in his eyes, the nervous twitch of his head that was always inclined slightly to one side—listening. The reason for his whole unconscious and never-relaxing poise for flight.

The house itself was a tiny, rotten, doll's house of a prison. He could feel it all around him as something that he wanted to push away. Push the walls out, push it down. And yet sometimes he was on good terms with the house. In the evenings, for instance, with the beautiful sound of the front door closing on the departure of his parents, he and the house could relax.

The tension was something unseen, but very nearly touchable. His parents took this atmosphere out with them. It had its origin in the self-sufficiency of their movements, the hard "something" behind their eyes even when they smiled. The resistance to it was somewhere behind his own eyes—mute but unyielding. This was something that he, the house, and his parents held between them like a secret. The words, the screamings, the beatings, the curses, were only symptoms that touched the surface of it.

His mother jerked him in with an abrupt movement of her head, and dismissed him in the same gesture. "Get your dinner out the oven," she said. And in an aside to Uncle Arthur's wife, "They know when it's time to come back, don't they? When their bellies want fillin'—that's the time to come back."

Bloody and bleeding and bastard were common adjectives to Mrs. Stebbings; very necessary to a woman so temperamentally self-expressive. In her good moods she used the word nice.

She was a short plump woman, big-hipped and big-stomached. She was proud of her well-shaped legs, of her small dainty hands and equally dainty feet. She was proud of her face too, which was beautiful. Her hair, which had lost all its former life from the effects of too many permanent waves, was frizzed into little curls over her forehead. Her skin was olive, and the large damaged pores of it could be seen, at close quarters, through layers of make-up. She had fine eyes, a perfectly shaped nose, and a cupid's bow mouth. Her lower lip had a permanent outward thrust to it, as did her stomach.

She was sitting too close to the oven door, next to the fire, for Joe's comfort. He cringed past her, his left arm jumping in its habitual alertness to defend his face. His dinner was a curled-up portion of finnan haddock, kept company on one side by some large leaves of cabbage, and on the other by two boiled potatoes.

For once he was not quick enough to hide his expression. He loathed fish. His mother, as always, was quick to understand him. Her hand curled and slashed upwards at his face. He avoided it with the same spontaneous speed, but almost dropped the plate.

"What's the marrer, you little bastard? If you got here at the proper time, you'd get your bloody grub on time." And to the company, "Bloody kids, these days, Arth—don't know they're born, do they? Wait on them bloody hand and foot and you get no thanks for it."

Arth nodded sagaciously, but winked at Joe very slightly. His wife smiled her lazy blonde smile. Mrs. Stebbings nagged on. Once started, it was impossible to stop her until she ran down like a clock.

Joe ate his dinner. To his relief, the company soon forgot about him. His father came in from the kitchen and distributed the beer. Joe knew that he was safe from his father so long as there was company present. Mr. Stebbings was a tall, thin, unobtrusive-looking man. He kept in the background at any gathering, saying little, but quick to pass his cigarettes, pour a drink, open a door. People, if they noticed him at all, told each other what a nice man he was.

Joe did not hate his mother. She terrified him, but there was a part of him that respected her. She was afraid of nobody. And she had her good moods. For his father he had a hatred that was so white-hot in its intensity that he could not bear to stay in the same room alone with his father's discarded overcoat.

They were talking loudly, competing against the radio. His father and Uncle Arthur discussing the pools, his mother and the other woman talking across them about clothes.

"So I sez to him—'If y'gonna puttnythink on the treble chance,' I sez, 'yer better put a decent-sized stake—'"

"The most gorgeous thing you ever saw. Right in the front of the window. But when I saw the price—"

"Quite right, Stebby, quite right. These fellers hope for a big win, but they won't muck in—they just won't muck in! What's the use of 'arf a dozen people clubbing together on the one coupon if—"

"But what chance do we ever get of seeing anything like that, Ame? The most we ever get—"

Presently his father stood up and switched off the wireless.

" Is that rain I can hear? " asked Uncle Arthur's wife. " Don't tell me that's rain."

Rain! Joe gulped and choked on the last piece of finnan haddock. And his beautiful book, on top of the coal.

" Where d'you think you're going? " asked his father. " You're not going out again tonight."

" The other two will be in in a minute, you watch," said his mother. " Soaked to the bloody skin—"

" The wood," he mumbled. " It'll get wet if I leave it out there. I'll bring it in."

" Strike! " said his mother, surprised. " Don't tell me it's had a sensible idea in its head! "

Joe slipped away with the furtiveness of a housebreaker. He stood at the bottom of the yard, the book in his hands, for the moment completely at a loss. In his mind he was already seeing the cover of it turned to smutty pulp, and the outraged expression of the librarian as she refused to let him have any more books.

Knock on somebody's door and ask them to keep it for him? His mother would be bound to get to hear of it. Leave it in a cardboard box in the yard? Cardboard also turned pulpy in the rain. His eyes were blank and wide open.

A quick gust of wind thrust at him and slammed the lavatory door with sudden violence in passing. His mother's voice screamed from behind the window, " Fix that bleeding thing on the latch! " The lavatory! Of course! Behind the pipe.

He thrust the book behind the pipe, wedging it carefully. In daylight it could not be missed, but nobody would be looking for a book in there in the dark. With just a little luck . . . Snatching up the wood from behind the mangle, he re-entered the house.

" Here, have one of mine. No, it's all right—I can get some more in the bar."

Joe caught the words with a stab of elation. His father was smoothing his hair flat with brilliantine. Uncle Arthur was lighting his father's last cigarette and struggling to his feet. His mother was touching up her eyebrows with a soft pencil in a small compact mirror. Uncle Arthur's wife was standing up and dreamily picking blonde hairs from her collar. They were all going out to the pub. Joe sat diffidently on the sagging arm of the couch, trying not to look as if he was waiting.

His mother was a mind reader. " Like to see us all go out, don't you? " she asked him tauntingly.

He did not reply. She was in a good mood now. She and the rest of them would be back after closing time, singing loud enough to be heard for streets around. She would expect tea and

sandwiches ready for them all; the dishes, that were stacked in a greasy pile in the kitchen, all washed up; the table laid, wood and coal ready for tomorrow morning's fire; the kitchen swept and tidied; and his younger brothers to have been brought in from whatever game they were playing in the backstreets and be in bed. From long practice he was very efficient, he could do all this in less than an hour. And he would have at least one beautiful hour left all to himself. To read his book. Usually he read the paper or listened to the wireless.

Uncle Arthur was struggling into his overcoat. "'Ow old are you now, son?" he asked Joe.

"I'll be twelve next Saturday," said Joe.

Uncle Arthur raised his eyebrows. "Is that so? Getting to be a big lad, ay? Ah well," he added by way of obscure comfort, "plenty of time to grow, plenty of time!"

"Just look who's talking!" cracked his mother, busy with a lipstick.

Uncle Arthur was not offended. "Ah well," he said, "plenty of time to grow meself yet!" He nudged Mrs. Stebbings playfully with his shoulder. "Twenty-one next birthday, y'know. Twenty-one!" He started to sing and dance a little jig. "*Twenty-one today, twenty-one today—I've got the key of the door—*" He tripped over the edge of the mat and came to a sudden standstill. "Tell you what, lad," he exclaimed, pointing a finger at Joe, "I'll be coming up next Saturday. I'll hafta bring you something, won't I? Now what would you like, kid? Don't be shy. What would you like me to bring you?"

Joe looked up at him, a trifle embarrassed, and aware that his mother was looking at him warningly in the background, the lipstick still poised. One of the things she most disliked about him was his disinclination to accept anything from anybody. "If anybody's soft enough to give you anything," she would say, "then you have to be soft enough to take it."

Nobody else would buy him a present. His mother, oddly enough, would buy him a card. Scrawled all over the inside it would say, "*From your ever-loving mother, father, and the kids.*" The rest of the space would be taken up with crosses. In all arguments and beatings for the next six months to come, she would remember buying him this card. "Ungrateful little bastard. Remember the bloody card I bought you for your birthday? What bleeding thanks do I get?"

At that moment Mr. Stebbings put his head round the door. His face had an odd expression on it. He looked over at his wife with the look of one who wishes to impart a secret. His voice, when he spoke, was very soft. "Here," he said, "come and have

a look what I've found." He did not so much as glance at his son.

Joe's blood froze, he could feel it draining away from his face, and his legs getting weak. Despair was a sudden heavy weight in his stomach.

"That's right; you have a good think about it, lad," said Uncle Arthur. He turned away with a vague wave and followed his wife and Mrs. Stebbings outside.

Joe sat stonily in the kitchen. He could hear the voices all commenting at once from the yard. The clock on the sideboard ticked the moments away uncaringly. The fire murmured and settled further into itself. The shabby, disordered little room, lit at the centre by one harsh, naked electric bulb, seemed to wait with a curious detachment.

He would have to say to the librarian, "I'm sorry, miss, but I've lost the book. I've looked everywhere, and I think somebody must have taken it."

And she would say, "Well, you'll just have to have another look for it then, won't you? Or you will have to pay for it. These books cost money, you know."

Where would he get the money? Perhaps his teacher might lend him the money. No, no, he couldn't do that. He couldn't ever ask Miss Gibbs for money. Especially not after her saying that he was a naturally artistic boy, the most promising boy in the school.

A paper job? If he managed to get a job at seven-and-six, and he told his mother he was only getting six-and-six, she would only take five bob from him. But how would he manage it in the mornings, with the fire to light and the kids to get to school? And his mother would ask at the paper shop how much he was getting.

A small live coal fell out of the fire and splattered on to the hearth. His head moved slightly and he watched it fade and crumble.

In another moment he would have to face the beating. The screams, the curses, and the joking asides to the company. His mother dashing inside and dragging him out to the yard to make him watch while his father destroyed the book and put it into the dustbin. For being deceitful. For sneaking around like a thief. For his slyness, and doing things behind his parents' backs. And his mother would say virtuously, "And we would have let him keep the bloody thing if only he had been open and above-board about it. Slyness—that's what I can't stand—slyness. No son of mine is going to sneak around like a coward."

He would not resist, protest, or even move. He would wait

until it was all over. In the darkness, afterwards, he would pull the grey sheets up to his neck and nurse his bruises. It was a point of pride with him not to show any reaction, even to himself.

They were coming back. He sat like an over-coiled spring, waiting.

They were all laughing. His mother pushed through the door first, shivering exaggeratedly with the cold. Uncle Arthur and his wife followed. And then his father.

His father was holding a frightened spaniel puppy by the scruff of the neck.

Joe did not move.

His father tossed the puppy on to the floor and gave it a shove. It cowered miserably, not moving.

"Get a couple of quid for that if nobody claims it; but how the devil did it get in? Backyard door must have blown open."

The room, the voices, moved in crazy confusion through Joe's head. His eyes were completely stupid.

"This silly kid!" said his mother, and pushed him off the edge of the couch. The push brought him back to life. "Sit around all night. Go and get some milk for that poor bloody dog."

He was astounded by his good fortune, blushing with sheer gratitude. Halfway out of the door, Uncle Arthur's voice stopped him abruptly. "Well, have you thought yet, kid?"

Joe turned round very slowly. There was a moment's pause. He looked down and his eyes pondered an old shoe under the table and moved to the shivering puppy which was also looking at the shoe. He moved and bent to pick up the dog in his arms. It started with fright and then relaxed, trembling against him. He rubbed his chin against the top of the dog's head.

They were all waiting, looking at him, nobody impatient. He was thinking that his mother never let him refuse a present from an outsider, and would let him keep it. His eyes, when he suddenly raised them to look at Uncle Arthur, were bright blue, and there was a disconcerting clarity about their directness. His voice was clear.

"I think what I'd really like most, Uncle Arthur—would be a book. Any sort of a book. It wouldn't matter what it was about."

The dog sighed and moved in his arms, and suddenly stopped trembling.

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ASTRONOUGHTS

Space: the only thing some pupils take up in school

A Batch of Bedfellows

Drowsily, dreamily, dreamily, drowsily,
Calmly and quietly, counting the cowsily,
Sleepily, languidly, languidly, sleepily,
Snoozily, snorily, snorily, snoozily,
Why keep awake when they've sold out of
boozily?

ROGER TILL

Room Service

The whole place had been converted into a bower of roses. The walls were entirely covered with them. A great couch of deepest red ones was at one side, mixed up in such masses as to be quite resisting and firm. From the roof chains of roses hung, concealing small lights—while from above the screen of lilac-bushes in full bloom the moon in all her glory mingled with the rose-shaded lamps and cast a glamour and unreality over the whole.

The dinner table was covered with tuberoses and stephanotis, surrounding the cupid fountains of perfume. The scent of all those flowers! And the warm summer night! No wonder Paul's senses quivered with exaltation. No wonder his head swam . . .

Throughout the repast, his lady bewildered him with her wide fascination. Never before had she seemed to collect all her moods into one subtle whole, cemented together by passionate love. The exaltation of Paul's spirit had reached its zenith.

" My Paul," she said, when at last only the rare fruits and the golden wine remained, and they were quite alone . . . " My Paul, I want you never to forget this night . . . never to think of me but as gloriously happy, clasped in your arms amid the roses. And see, we must drink once more together of our wedding wine, and complete our souls' delight."

An eloquence seemed to come to Paul and loosen his tongue, so that he whispered back paeans of worship in language as fine as her own. And the moon flooded the loggia with her light, and the roses gave forth their scent. It was the supreme effort of art and nature to cover them with glorious joy.

" My darling one," the lady whispered in his ear, as she lay in his arms on the couch of roses, crushed deep and half buried in

their velvet leaves. "This is our souls' wedding. In life and in death they can never part more . . ."

. . . Dawn was creeping through the orchid blinds of their sleeping-chamber when this strange Queen disengaged herself from her lover's embrace, and bent over him, kissing his young curved lips. He stirred not—the languor of utter prostration was upon him . . .

The lady gazed at him, an anguish too deep for tears in her eyes. For was not this the end—the very end. Fierce dry sobs shook her. There was something terrible and tigerish in her grief. And yet her will made her not linger—there was still one thing to do.

She rose and turned to the writing-table by the window, then drawing the blind aside a little she began rapidly to write. When she had finished, without reading the missive over, she went and placed it with a flat leather jewel-case on her pillow beside Paul. And soon she commenced a madness of farewells—all restrained and gentle for fear he should awake.

"My love, my love," she wailed between her kisses, "God keep you safe—though he may never bring you back to me."

Then with a wild, strangled sob, she fled from the room.

ELINOR GLYN, *Three Weeks*

Imperial Luxury: The Bed
at the Furniture Exhibition, 1959

1. *A frame of 200-year-old English ash. The bedhead and panelling of the side fitments are made of imported Rio rosewood; cupboards and drawers lined with grey-dyed sycamore.*
2. Twin 3′ 0″ Springwall mattress beds for full width comfort. Each mattress is covered in a new continental-designed tick of "champagne" patterned damask . . .
3. *Two Hydromatic contour bed base units by which the mattress can be automatically and individually adjusted to any position at the touch of a button, e.g. for reading, watching T.V., convalescing, breakfast in bed. The mechanism is silent in operation . . .*

4. Twin side fitments for HIM and HER. These both have built-in radios, book-shelves, and drop-down fronts that lock into bedside tables. Each has a velvet-lined jewel and accessory drawer holding Ronson electric razor, and a push-button console drawer by which it is possible to:

    Open and shut the bedroom window curtains
    Control the room lights
    Control the mattress heating units
    Switch the T.V. set on and off
    Communicate to all rooms in the house by the Fonadek intercom system, and make outside telephone calls. (There are no microphones, etc. to be seen . . . The person in bed just presses a button or dials and talks.)

    In addition on HIS side there is a tape recorder for business-dictation-in-comfort or late-night music, and on HER side a Goblin automatic tea-maker and a silver tea service . . .

5. *A portable T.V. set which stands at the foot of the bed . . .*
6. Twin coverlets of rare " champagne " mink fur and French (Lyons) velvet. There are enough skins of Canadian mutation Emba mink to make a full length fur coat.

J. L. SECCOMBE, *Director, Slumberland Ltd.*

Eskimo Nights

I slipped into my fur bag. The children squeezed themselves under the skins, and the wrinkled granny, grumbling and complaining like any old lady, squatted on her heels and stripped off all her clothes. She got into bed, muttering to herself and grunting, tossing about for a while before she fell asleep. Ayallik, meanwhile, had stripped to the nude. With a cheerful " Alapa! "—" Cold! " he vanished under his covers. Ongirlak was the last to go to bed. She plugged the door-hole with a snow block and fixed her lamps for the night, beating out all of the flame except for a tiny glow in the corner, a night-light . . .

I must finally have fallen asleep, for at dawn I felt them shake me, and came awake. A shy, pale light filtered through the ice window and displayed Ongirlak putting on her parka. Soon she was up, leaning over the lamps, straightening the wicks and blowing up the flames, so that in a few moments the whole igloo was brightly lighted. Last night the walls had been grey-blue; this morning they were totally white, covered with fine frost. I turned on my fur bed and a shower of ice particles, a kind of frigid rain, completed my awakening.

ROGER P. BULIARD, *Inuk*

The Impostors

by

GERALD SPARROW

IMPOSTORS fascinate me, writes Gerald Sparrow, because, as often as not, they come to believe in their impersonations. They develop split personalities. They are nearly always a little mad, but mad in the new, fashionable manner which permits them to be extremely crafty and convincing in their dealings with the public. None of them is mad in the old legal meaning of the term. They all know what they are doing and, according to their lights, they can distinguish between right and wrong.

We are dealing here with the great escapists, men and women who wish to jump out of their own skins into someone else's. Very often their object in doing this is money, but it is not always so. Often the impelling force is a combination of desires.

Stanley Weyman, for instance, doubtless wanted money, but his extraordinary career is explicable only if we assume that he loved the diplomatic life and that he felt happy near the centre of affairs. His choice of impersonations nearly always bestowed on him some kind of diplomatic privilege, and his love of the United Nations was not, I feel, inspired by avarice so much as by his affection for politics.

I enjoyed writing of the great impostors. I hope you enjoy reading about them. Here is the first, Stanley Weyman.

STEPHEN Weinberg, who slipped so easily into the names of Stanley Weyman, Stanley Clifford Weyman, Dr. Weyman, and even General Weyman, was born in Brooklyn and wanted

desperately to be a professional man, a doctor if possible. His parents were too poor for him to realise this ambition and he was reduced as a youth to clerking, which he hated.

Young Weinberg had the cool, clear eye of the Jewish immigrant who sees the world just as it is from his own angle. What Stephen saw was a world divided into drudges and masters. The majority were drudges, but above and beyond these, moving in a world of their own, were the masters, the Army and Navy officers, the diplomats, the professional men, and, in recent years, the officers of the United Nations, a very privileged band of cosmopolitan gentlemen.

If music and colour were to accompany these accounts of great impostors all the stops would have to be pulled out for Weinberg, and all the colours of the rainbow used to herald his story. For, in many ways, he was the supreme impostor. His audacity knew no limits. When still very young he appears to have said to himself, "Very well, if I can't climb the ladder, I'll jump it." And he did, partly no doubt for money, but partly, it seems, to realise his dream, and from a sense of humour that was sharper and more sardonic than the acceptable American brand.

Weyman, as we will now call him, never gave up. He was exposed, arrested, imprisoned, branded as an arch swindler, hounded by the police, but he carried on, planning new coups each more daring than the last. What a newspaper man he would have made! But he was a lone wolf. He appears to have confided in no one. For a time he would lie quietly hidden in the backstreets of New York City, then he would emerge again with new credentials, a new uniform, new orders, but with the old audacity. He was his own hero, and the story of his ventures is a delight to recall.

Stanley was just twenty-one when he left his job in a Brooklyn counting-house and celebrated his majority by crossing over to Manhattan—as the United States Consul-General to Morocco. He lived for some weeks in an aura of diplomatic prestige and immunity, dining only at the very best restaurants and living on the credit which was readily granted him.

Stanley was a linguist, a sharp-featured little man with quick, appraising eyes; sallow, but not without dignity. It is remarkable that during his long career of deception he was always accepted at his own valuation, which varied constantly, by those who were —well, his dupes. It was only the irritating perseverance of the police who, as the years went by, collected a fantastic Weinberg file, that time and again interrupted his adventures. This first sortie into the grand world ended in a sojourn at

Elvira reform school. Society, in the shape of the courts, still thought that young Weinberg could be reformed. It was only later that any thought of this was given up. In the end, of course, Stanley Weyman became almost an American institution. The public gasped with a kind of outraged admiration at each new exploit. It had to be admitted that the little man had brains—and a perverted courage.

The reform school bored Stanley—not unnaturally—and he determined by exemplary conduct to earn a quick release. This he secured after a year.

Almost at once he adopted a double role—Army and Navy, too. He was a military attaché from Serbia, complete, of course, with diplomatic immunity, freedom from arrest, and large credit facilities, and at the same time a young lieutenant in the U.S. Navy. Stanley does not seem to have treated the lieutenant very seriously—he preferred foreigners—but he was useful when the police were chasing the attaché, for by that time Stanley was the young Naval officer. The girls, too, seemed to like Naval uniform, but it was the Serbian attaché who brought in the good hard credit. When the police finally caught up with both Stanleys, he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, but he did not waste his time in prison, as we shall see.

Stanley was so model a prisoner that it seemed no time before he was out on parole again, this time as a colonel in the Rumanian Army and as Rumanian Consul-General in New York. He needed a public confirmation of his new position to establish his alibi beyond doubt and to confirm his credit. He decided that an official inspection of a great United States warship by himself would effect both these objectives. It did.

Stanley rang up the Navy Department and said, "This is Weyman speaking. I am the Rumanian Consul-General. Her Majesty the Queen of Rumania has asked that I should pay my respects to your service. Please make the necessary arrangements and inform me accordingly."

The Navy got busy. The protocol wires hummed. Soon all was ready for an inspection by the Consul-General who, as the Queen's representative, had clearly a special and high position. A naval launch, the equivalent of an admiral's barge in Britain, flags flying—the flag of Rumania alongside the Stars and Stripes—and dressed overall, took the Consul to the U.S.S. *Wyoming*.

The consul inspected the guard of honour. In his light blue uniform, heavily encrusted with gold braid, he was an imposing figure. Nor was the inspection a formality. His eagle eye caught out two errors in full-dress uniform. The officers of the *Wyoming* were impressed. This little man knew his stuff.

Taking wine with the officers after the inspection, Stanley told them how much his monarch would appreciate their friendly gesture. In return he proposed to hold a dinner in their honour. The captain of the *Wyoming* and his officers accepted there and then.

Stanley arranged the dinner by hiring a private suite in the Astor. The menu and wines were chosen with a discerning eye and with no regard to expense. When the Italian banqueting manager whispered deferentially, "And the bill, monsieur. To whom do I send it?" Stanley replied, "To the Rumanian Consulate, of course."

Unfortunately the Astor, proud of their banquet with its monarchical background, let the Press know of it. The F.B.I. noticed the name Weyman. Could it be? It seemed most unlikely, but they sent two men along to make sure. They recognised Stanley. He was called outside during dinner. A message from Her Majesty perhaps? No, it was the guardians of the law.

The captain of the *Wyoming*, closely questioned by a stunned Press as to how the Navy could have slipped up to the extent of believing every word that Stanley had said, replied, with ill-concealed admiration, "All I can say is the little guy put on one hell of a tour." It was indeed a tour de force.

For two or three years after this exploit in 1915, Stanley was less ambitious. He assumed the role of a Naval lieutenant and, occasionally, a businessman, a part which he appears rather to have despised. Clearly he loved gorgeous uniforms, and the impersonation of a business executive, though it might bring in the money, offered no scope for theatrical display.

Then one happy day Stanley read that Princess Fatima of Afghanistan was not being well received on her official visit to the United States. Stanley decided he should be her public relations officer.

He could perhaps have done this openly and honestly, but such was not his nature. He dressed up in immaculate morning dress and presented himself to the Princess as Stanley Clifford Weyman, an Under-Secretary in the State Department.

He regretted, his Government regretted, the poor reception given to the Princess. All this would now be remedied. She should accompany him to Washington at once. Yes, ten thousand dollars would buy the necessary official gifts.

The Princess was installed in a hotel by the masterful Stanley. A special train was hired. Stanley adopted the full-dress uniform of a naval commander, and in no time at all had the Princess chatting amiably to the Secretary of State. A word in the ear of

an aide quickly alerted the President, who received the Princess at the White House. The Princess was gratified. Stanley carried on a cheerful conversation with Warren G. Harding. The two men seemed to understand each other. As Stanley and the Princess steamed back to New York in triumph, an inquiry was held as to the bona fides of the Princess' charming liaison officer. It was too late. Stanley had already kissed the Princess' hand for the last time—and vanished into the tortuous slums of Brooklyn.

After this epic escapade Stanley again assumed a quieter but no less profitable career as minor impostor. He appeared as a federal officer lecturing on prison reform. After all, he knew his subject. He appeared as Dr. Weyman and had long, and apparently learned, discussions with the famous Dr. Adolf Lorenz of Vienna who, as the " bloodless surgeon," was lionised in the States. But these were minor impersonations. It was not until the death of Rudolph Valentino, the great lover of the silent screen, that Stanley ran again into the big time.

Pola Negri, the famous Polish actress, was, it seemed, almost demented with grief by the death of the tender and handsome actor.

When a Dr. Weyman, an old friend of Valentino, called on the grief-stricken actress he was welcomed with open arms. Pola Negri was a woman who enjoyed ill health. It was never revealed what form, exactly, her indisposition took, but, whatever it was, a sympathetic and magnetic doctor made it better. Stanley was exactly what Pola wanted. Pola was just what Stanley was looking for. How much of the actress' substantial fortune passed into Stanley's hands we shall never know, but he always remembered Pola with affectionate appreciation.

What may crudely be described as the Valentino racket provided Stanley with another sideline. He set up a clinic at a house of the dead star, a medical clinic devoted to the special gifts of healing which Dr. Weyman may well have possessed, for a study of the career of this truly remarkable man suggests he was no mean mesmerist, and the healing possibilities of mesmerism and auto-suggestion were still in their infancy.

The official visit of Queen Marie of Rumania provided Stanley with a glittering opportunity. The American Press was distraught. Not a single journalist had been able to penetrate the guard of the entourage of this beautiful, powerful and romantic woman. This was before the age when the Balkan States were in the hands of puppet thugs. The Queen, a woman of character and charm, was a real ambassador of her people; and her State played a key role in European politics.

The editor of the *Evening Graphic* was as upset as all his rivals. Then a young reporter, half in joke, said, "We better try Weyman."

The editor jumped as if he had been shot. "Weyman! Get Weyman here."

Stanley arrived, cool, assured, unruffled. Yes, of course he could get an interview if the fee was good enough. How? they asked him. "That's my business," was the only reply. The deal was done.

An hour later the Queen was chatting delightedly to Mr. Weyman, "one of the Secretaries of State." That evening the subways were rocked by the *Graphic* coup. The *Graphic* rivals might protest at these methods, but the *Graphic* only smiled and watched its circulation figure rise.

Stanley seems to have ignored entirely the lesson of the *Graphic*—the possibility that he could earn a good living by selling himself to the newspapers. It was not the type of life he liked. He was choosey. He tired about this time of being a doctor and decided to become a lawyer for a change. He gave good, unbiased, experienced advice, and his clients had no complaint. But an inquisitor from the Bar Association had. Stanley was not a member of the union. He was unmasked and had to wind up his practice.

During the war, I regret to say, Stanley did not show up very well. Patriotism was not one of his virtues. He ran a school for draft dodgers. It was very popular and lucrative. He taught his eager pupils to malinger and show convincing symptoms of any illness from deafness to mental instability.

The police caught up with Stanley's academy for cowards. When he was caught, so imposing was his dossier that he received longer sentences. He spent most of his time in gaol.

When peace came he was free again. He resisted the temptation to make money honestly, as he could have done almost from the start, for by any standards he was an exceptionally able man.

Even in the postwar years, when there is some evidence that he had opportunities of earning a living in the ordinary way, Stanley could not quench the artist in himself, the insatiable desire to be something and somebody he was not.

He conceived the idea of the Erwin News Service with himself, as Robert Erwin, as proprietor and manager. The Erwin News Service operated at the United Nations Headquarters on Manhattan. This project was a curious blend of authenticity and fraud. Stanley had a nose for news. He was a born reporter. His news agency work brought him into contact with the big names at UNO. He chatted almost daily with Mr. Gromyko,

Gerald Sparrow . . .

Gerald Sparrow once wrote a treatise on How to Become a Millionaire and a book on How to Become an M.P. For himself, he chose the Law and became, instead, Judge of the International Courts of Bangkok and Chiengmai, a Knight Commander of the Crown of Thailand, and one of the greatest authorities on Siam and South-East Asia. It was while he was in Chiengmai that he acquired his vast and fascinating knowledge of wild and working elephants. His enthralling No Other Elephant appeared in Argosy.

A Japanese prisoner-of-war for four years, Judge Sparrow continued practising privately in Bangkok after the war until he returned to England in 1954. Now living in Blackheath, he takes a lively interest in politics and a special delight in trout fishing and famille rose china.

the chief Russian delegate, and with Warren Austin of the United States delegation. They regarded him as a highly intelligent and shrewd observer of the international scene, which he was. But, of course, the Erwin News Agency did not really exist, except in the fertile mind of this bizarre changeling.

However, Stanley could probably have carried on near the centre of great events if he had not tried to improve his position. He applied for the post of public relations officer to the Royal Thai Embassy. Now the Ambassador, Prince Varnvaidya, had instructed his First Secretary to take the greatest care in the selection of any candidate for this post. Inquiries were made. " Robert Erwin " was again exposed.

The Erwin News Agency was the last major project that Stanley conceived. He must have been grateful to it, for it brought him near the centre of power watching the actors walk on the world stage, and that was what, as he grew older, increasingly interested him.

Stanley's character was not a simple one. Why did he, until the very end, cling to the name of Weyman? He knew it was the name the police chiefly knew him by. Again, in many of his

enterprises he seems to have taken endless trouble—after he had obtained the essential money—to complete his mission. He introduced the Princess to the President surely out of pride, rather than greed.

Looking back on his amazing career one has to ask, What was Weyman? Was he just a clever impostor who liked earning money the easy way? Or was he mentally unstable? Was his a truly split personality? Did he, for the time being, really believe himself to bé a colonel in the Marines or a Balkan Consul-General? If so, was the secret of his fantastic success the fact that he was not pretending but, having deluded himself, was able to delude others?

I think it would be safe to say that his whole career derived from his early obsession, his great passion to enter the world of the professional and upper class. When that ambition was thwarted, he devised means of obtaining his goal without human sanction.

Stanley's ingenuity was without limit. During his Pola Negri period he wrote a book on medical jurisprudence, and in recent years he posed more than once as an official of the United Nations. He moved with the times. He was, of course, quite un-American in his behaviour pattern. He was a freeman of the world, especially the world of diplomatic immunity and privilege. Perhaps it is best not to put the man under the microscope, either from the legal or medical viewpoint.

It might be more profitable to study the circumstances that made his escapades possible. The comparative insularity of the United States until very recently no doubt assisted him enormously. Most American officials were genially ignorant of foreign protocol, but amiably disposed and desirous of not giving offence. Stanley capitalised these weaknesses.

He lived until 1960, and died a violent and curious death. It appears that one evening two gunmen called on Stanley, whom they suspected of having hidden his savings in his flat. When the masked men produced a gun Stanley was outraged. He had never carried a gun in his life. His only weapon had been his nimble brain, and a mastery of at least four languages. He fought the intruders with his bare hands. They shot him dead.

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Another audacious character from Gerald Sparrow's new book (to be published later this year) appears in next month's Argosy—not the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo, but an intrepid type who challenged perhaps the most famous bank in the world . . .

D. H. LAWRENCE

Two Poems on Love

Love has crept out of her sealed heart
  As a field-bee, black and amber,
  Breaks from the winter-cell, to clamber
Up the warm grass where the sunbeams start.

Mischief has come in her dawning eyes,
  And a glint of coloured iris brings
  Such as lies along the folded wings
Of the bee before he flies.

Who, with a ruffling, careful breath,
  Has opened the wings of the wild young sprite?
  Has fluttered her spirit to stumbling flight
In her eyes, as a young bee stumbleth?

Love makes the burden of her voice.
  The hum of his heavy, staggering wings
  Sets quivering with wisdom the common things
That she says, and her words rejoice.

Gloire de Dijon

When she rises in the morning
I linger to watch her;
She spreads the bath-cloth underneath the window
And the sunbeams catch her
Glistening white on the shoulders,
While down her sides the mellow
Golden shadow glows as
She stoops to the sponge, and her swung breasts
Sway like full-blown yellow
Gloire de Dijon roses.

She drips herself with water, and her shoulders
Glisten as silver, they crumple up
Like wet and falling roses, and I listen
For the sluicing of their rain-dishevelled petals.
In the window full of sunlight
Concentrates her golden shadow
Fold on fold, until it glows as
Mellow as the glory roses.

the Cat Cracker

MR. BEHRENS adjusted his glasses, aligned his left foot against the tell-tale, raised the heavy brass dart until it was level with his eye, and flipped it. As it left his hand the door of the Public Bar of The Lamb opened and a man came in.

Mr. Behrens' opponent said, " Double four. Nice shot."

The newcomer said, " Good God, if it isn't Mr. Behrens."

Mr. Behrens came out of the trance which affects a dart player trying for his final double, blinked, and said, " I've got a feeling I ought to know your face."

" No reason you should," said the newcomer. He was a man in his early forties with hair already thinning and greying, a long thick nose, and shrewd brown eyes. " When you last saw me I was fifteen and spotty."

" Now wait a minute," said Mr. Behrens. " Wait a minute. Taubmann. No. Tabor. Heinrich Tabor."

" It's been Henry for some years now. I hope I didn't put you off your throw."

" Not half you didn't," said his opponent. " If a bomb went off in the next room *he'd* still get his double four."

He put down the half pint of beer which was his tribute to Mr. Behrens' skill. He didn't really feel sour about it. But he was the local champion and for a week now he had been trying, with little success, to win beer off Mr. Behrens. " I must be off. See you this evening, I hope."

" You shall have your revenge this evening," said Mr. Behrens. And to Tabor, " Have you come in here for a drink, or to eat? If you're going to have lunch, perhaps you'd care to join me? Or you may have people with you? I take it you're motoring."

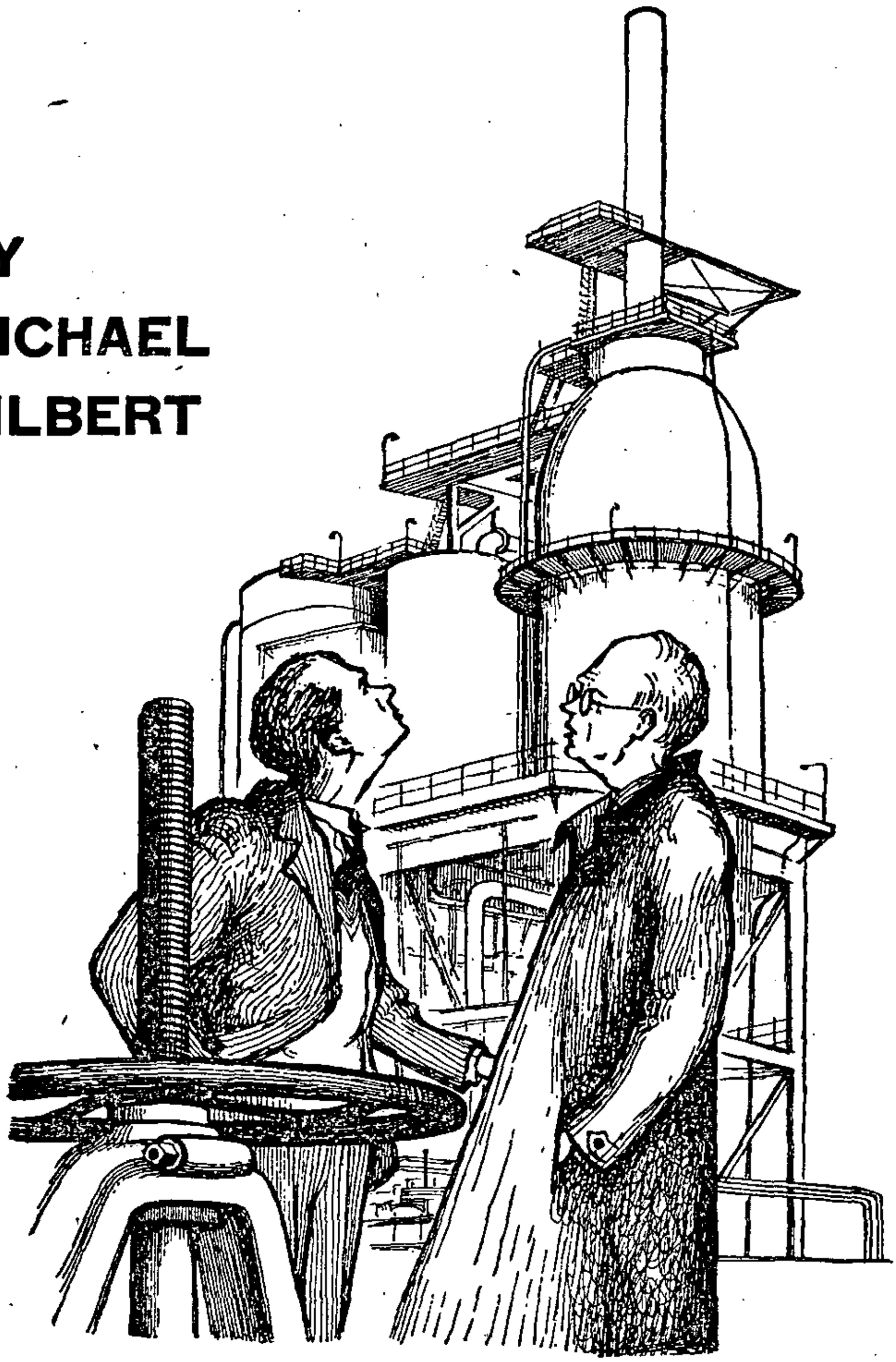
" I'm alone," said Tabor. " I'd love to have lunch with you. And I haven't got a car. I walked."

" Then you must have walked a long way," said Mr. Behrens. " Because there are few lonelier pubs in England than this one. That's one of the things I like about it."

" I come out here quite a lot from Ravenshoe," said Tabor. " It's a bit bleak now in winter. But you ought to see it in spring and summer."

" I've seen it in spring *and* in summer," said Mr. Behrens.

BY
MICHAEL
GILBERT



" I'm one of your most regular customers, Ruby. Isn't that right? "

" That's right," said Ruby. " Spring and autumn. Like the rates. What'll it be? There's hot steak-and-kidney pie or cold beef."

Resident guests were a rare occurrence at The Lamb and Mr. Behrens and Mr. Tabor had the coffee room to themselves.

" You're at the Refinery, of course," said Mr. Behrens.

"When you mentioned Ravenshoe the penny should have dropped. After I had failed to teach you the rudiments of Latin, you went off and specialised in science, didn't you? And got a science scholarship at Oxford?"

"They didn't call it a scholarship," said Tabor. There was an edge of bitterness in his voice. "Words like 'scholarship' are reserved for respectable subjects like Latin and Greek. But it came to the same thing. Other people paid for my education. The odd thing was that the further I got, the more money people seemed willing to splash out."

"Invest," said Mr. Behrens with a crinkled smile. "Invest. Where did you go after Oxford?"

"Back to Leipzig. After that I was going to Moscow. Fate willed otherwise."

"Of course. That would have been 1939. A pity." Mr. Behrens toyed with the idea of asking him what he had done during the war, but decided that it might be tactless. He said, "I've always heard that Ravenshoe was an interesting place. You produce more than oil and petrol, don't you?"

"Oil and petrol are almost a sideline. We sell enough to pay our overheads. I suppose you wouldn't care to look over it? You were always rather scornful of science, I seem to remember."

"That was when I was thirty-five and you were fifteen," said Mr. Behrens. "Our respective outlooks may have developed in the interim."

"It really is rather a wonderful place," said Tabor. "We can turn out end-products which even five years ago no one would have associated with crude oil. Plastics, nylon stockings, paint, cosmetics, explosives."

"I am prepared to admit," said Mr. Behrens, "that modern science is capable of almost anything. But it has *not* yet turned out anything quite like Ruby—or her mother's steak-and-kidney pie."

He regarded with a shade more than avuncular approval the trim, but well-developed, figure of the eighteen-year-old daughter of the house, then approaching them with a loaded and steaming tray.

"That's the Primary Distillation Unit," said Tabor, pointing to something which looked like a church tower under repair. "We could climb the scaffolding if you want, but you won't see any more from the top. The temperature's kept constant at 1000°—that's nothing out of the way, of course, but it's quite hot as refining processes go."

He raked open one of the boiler plate hatches and Mr. Behrens

peered into an ante-chamber of the Inferno. Gas, distilled from the oil, was carried round through pipes and ignited in a brick-kiln oven. The flames were white at the centre, tawny red and orange round the outer edge. The roaring was still in his ears as he moved away.

" So you don't call that hot? " he said.

" Chemically, no. We can produce ten times that heat. But, as a matter of fact, in a lot of ways it's *too* hot. You see—look here, how much of this are you really understanding? "

" I'm with you so far, I think," said Mr. Behrens. " You heat up the crude oil and distil off different products with different boiling points. Gas at the top, then petrol, after that paraffin, and diesel—and asphalt at the bottom. And the whole process is commonly known as ' cracking.' Right? "

" Correct," said Tabor. " But the trouble is that you can do a lot of harm to the crude oil if you have to heat it as high as a thousand degrees centigrade. On the other hand—it won't crack at less."

Mr. Behrens said, though whether jocularly or not it was hard to detect, " Interrogators have just the same problem, I believe. When dealing with suspects. Sometimes, they have to use so much force to crack them that they disintegrate in the process."

They were walking away from the Distillation Unit towards an affair shaped like a lopsided hourglass, with trimmings. Tabor checked for a moment in his stride, looked sideways at Mr. Behrens, and said, with a shade of hesitancy in his voice, " That's an odd analogy." They walked for a few steps in silence, and he added, " Chemically, we overcome the difficulty in rather an ingenious way. We mix a catalyst with the fuel—usually china clay—then the mixture can be cracked at much lower temperatures. That's the machine that does it."

Mr. Behrens stared at the squat apparatus. It had, he thought, an evil look. " I've heard oilmen talk about a ' cat cracker,' " he said. " I'd no idea that was what it was."

" There's not a lot to see," said Tabor. " No moving parts. No action. No excitement. It's rather an efficient piece of apparatus, all the same."

" It has a sort of feminine, yet feline, look about it, hasn't it? " said Mr. Behrens. " I wasn't only referring to its shape—although there's something in that too. I meant its general appearance of dangerous docility. One has the feeling that inside those deceptive curves, processes of unsuspected ferocity are taking place."

" You're an odd chap," said Tabor. But there was an undercurrent of affection, now, in his voice.

"I should never have made a scientist," agreed Mr. Behrens. "I am far too fanciful."

A week later, Mr. Behrens and Mr. Tabor both happened to go up to London. Mr. Behrens went by train. He had an appointment with his bank manager. Tabor went by car. He also had an appointment.

He parked his car in a sidestreet near Paddington Station, walked back down the Harrow Road, and turned into Saint Mary's Terrace. This runs up to the canal, sometimes hopefully referred to as London's Little Venice; on this bleak winter's day, an empty stretch of road beside a dirty reach of ruffled water.

There was only one human being in sight. He was a huge man, further enlarged by a tent-like overcoat, with a red face, and a corona of white hair which ruffled in the breeze. Tabor hurried towards him, both hands outstretched. The big man awaited him impassively.

"Paulus!"

"My dear Heinrich."

They shook hands warmly, Tabor looking into the older man's eyes as if there was some reassurance he hoped to find there.

"I remembered this place from my youth in London," said Professor Paulus Mann. "When I suggested meeting you here, I visualised us sitting, side by side, on a bench watching the ducks in the canal, and the pretty barges going up and down. I had forgotten the time of year—and the weather."

"There's a pub down there," said Tabor. "Or there was ten years ago. They used to have an open fire in the Saloon Bar, too."

"Splendid," said the Professor. "There we can sit, all afternoon, and talk of old times at Leipzig."

"Not in an English pub, Herr Professor," said Tabor . . .

Mr. Behrens was being shown, at this moment, into the private room of Mr. Fortescue, the manager of the Westminster Branch of the London and Home Counties Bank. Mr. Fortescue had another highly confidential job as well. The two telephones on his desk were neither of them connected with the public line. Mr. Behrens had once heard Mr. Fortescue speaking to the Home Secretary on one, while he kept the Foreign Secretary waiting on the other.

Mr. Fortescue now placed the tips of his fingers together in a manner much approved by bank managers, and said, "It's an extremely delicate situation. You do see that, don't you?"

"Yes, I do," said Mr. Behrens.

"It is not a case in which direct or forceful methods are likely to achieve anything but disaster. That is why I am relying on you."

Mr. Behrens was not sure whether to take this as a compliment or not. He contented himself with nodding his head.

"Was Tabor at all suspicious?"

"I think not. Fortunately, he recognised me first. He was in my class at Leipzig High School in 1934. I taught him Latin. *Not* science."

Mr. Fortescue said, "He had an English mother, and a German father. It was the mother who insisted on him going to Oxford, the father who brought him back to Leipzig University. He came over here—permanently, as we all hoped—in 1945. I assisted, myself, in screening him."

"He is too good a scientist for us to want to lose him?"

Mr. Fortescue was not a man given to extravagant statement. So when he said, "Tabor is one of the ablest scientists in the world," the words conveyed more to Mr. Behrens than a more elaborate eulogy.

"He is a specialist in cosmo-electronics. The electronics of the universe. It is a study which bears about the same relationship to ordinary electronics as electronics does to old-fashioned electricity. It is more a logic than a science. The few gifted men whose minds are capable of understanding it make up their own rules, draw their own charts—even speak their own language."

"And Professor Paulus Mann is one of them?"

"He was a pioneer. Tabor studied under him at Leipzig. Possibly he is not in the front rank now. Nevertheless, it was a very astute move sending him over here. Tabor will listen to him, if he will listen to no one else."

"If he wants to go, could we keep him?"

"By force, certainly not. We are not at war. And Tabor is not in Government employment. Nor is he subject to the Official Secrets Acts."

"Do you think we can do it by persuasion?"

Mr. Fortescue said, "Scientists are very curious people. You remember the old jokes about absentminded professors who forgot to put their trousers on when they went out in the morning? There's an element of truth in it."

"As in many jokes," agreed Mr. Behrens.

"The walls of the laboratory protect them. But they also insulate them. They miss the maturing influences of history, philosophy, and religion. They know as much about the outside world as battery-reared chickens. In one sense, they are terrifyingly adult, miles ahead of the most intelligent non-scientist. In another sense, they hardly grow up at all."

Mr. Behrens looked at Mr. Fortescue curiously. He had never heard him express himself at such length on any subject.

"You're not suggesting, are you," he said gently, "that I should corner the poor young man and lecture him on the Western way of life?"

"It might come to that. Much will depend on what measure of success Professor Mann is having with him. I must ask you to stay within reach of a telephone for the next few weeks."

On his way out Mr. Behrens paused for a moment, in the ante-room, to admire the Landseer painting which hung on the wall. It was an allegorical study showing Thrift conducting a tug-of-war with Extravagance. In the circumstances he thought it rather appropriate.

It was almost exactly three weeks later, at four o'clock in the afternoon, that the call came.

"He has thrown up his job at the refinery," said the thin voice of Mr. Fortescue. "He did not even offer notice. He told them he was going, and he walked out."

"That's bad. Where is he now?"

"He's taken his stuff out to that public house—the one you mentioned."

"The Lamb. Yes. Is there any reason to think that he's actually contemplating leaving the country?"

"No direct evidence. But Professor Mann is flying back to Düsseldorf on Monday. And he has booked two seats."

"If Tabor *is* at The Lamb," said Mr. Behrens, looking out of the window at the snow, which had started to fall again, "he might not get to London Airport all that easily on Monday."

"We can't rely on him being snowbound. You'll have to go over and talk to him."

Mr. Behrens had received some steep instructions from Mr. Fortescue from time to time, but this seemed to him to be nearly the steepest. He opened his mouth to protest; but shut it again. All the objections which were occurring to him would already have occurred to his superiors. If this really was the only possible course, slight though the chance of success might be, it would have to be pursued to the end.

He said, "I shall have to tell some story to account for my arrival."

"Tell no story at all. Explain exactly who you are, and what you are doing."

"You think that is wise?"

"The other side are not fools. They will certainly have warned him against you."

"Of course," said Mr. Behrens. "I hadn't thought of that. Very well. I'll see what I can do."

His aunt, with whom he shared the old Rectory at Lamperdown, said crossly, "You can't be thinking of going out in weather like this."

"The call of duty," said Mr. Behrens. "One of my old pupils in difficulties."

"Fiddlesticks," said the old lady, who was no fool. "It's one of your jobs. I suppose Mr. Calder's in it with you. And that heathen dog of his."

"No," said Mr. Behrens sadly. "I fear this is something I have to do on my own."

It was not a pleasant drive. As dusk fell, the snow thickened, crusting the windscreen and collecting on the blades of the wiper. After a few miles, Mr. Behrens had to stop his car and get out with a cloth to clear away the accumulation. On the first occasion, he was incautious enough to do this on a slight up-gradient, and found, when he tried to re-start, that his wheels were unable to grip the road, which had frozen under fresh fallen snow. He succeeded eventually in sliding backwards on to a level patch, and got going with a wild scurry. After that he chose his stopping places more carefully.

It was nearly eight o'clock when he saw the welcoming lights of The Lamb. The last hour had been a nightmare of crawling along frozen, hump-backed roads which dropped on either side into black ditches. There was nothing amiss with Mr. Behrens' nerves, and he had unexpected reserves of stamina in his thin body, but he could not restrain a sigh of relief as he climbed out of the car. Ruby was in the empty public bar, polishing glasses. "Not that we'll get any customers on a night like this," she said. "We got your telephone message. I put a hot bottle in your bed."

"Good girl," said Mr. Behrens. "Is Mr. Tabor here?"

"He's in the coffee room. I told him you were coming."

"Did he seem to be surprised?"

"No. He said he'd been expecting you'd be over some time."

"I'll join him in a moment. And make us up a good fire. We may be sitting up late tonight. We've got a lot to talk about."

For a moment Ruby's brown eyes rested on him shrewdly. He wondered if she had any idea what was going on. Tabor had been alone in the place for some days, and a man who is unhappy and undecided would talk to any sympathetic listener.

"Don't you go keeping him up too late," said Ruby. "He's got a lot on his mind."

"So have I," said Mr. Behrens sadly. "So have I."

"Can you honestly, and in all conscience," said Tabor, "give me a single reason why I shouldn't go?"

Mr. Behrens got up, selected three more lumps of coal from the nearly empty scuttle, and placed them on the fire.

"I've spent the best part of four hours giving you reasons," he said. He had forced himself to keep any trace of weariness, any touch of exasperation, out of his voice. The fact that Tabor had been willing to argue at all must, in itself, be a hopeful sign. His mind was not yet closed.

"And what do they amount to? That the world is divided into two halves. The West and the East. The rights and the wrongs. The goods and the bads—like a film."

"It's not quite as simple as that—"

"You're arguing a prepared case, like a barrister who's been briefed. I accept that you've got your job to do—you're acting on orders. You've been very frank with me about that. But it doesn't make your case any stronger."

"If I didn't believe what I've been telling you," said Mr. Behrens flatly, "I shouldn't have bothered to come out on a night like this."

"All right," said Tabor. "I take that back. I'll accept that you, personally, believe what you're saying. But that's because you've been conditioned to believe it. Very few people in the West are capable of thinking internationally any more. But if you could only get outside your traditional English skin for a moment—shake off the moss—clear away the cobwebs—you'd see what everyone else has been seeing for a long time now—that you're finished. You're dying on your feet. Every symptom of degeneracy is there. Softness, and selfishness, and fear. The sort of softness that's bringing up children to think they can do what they like, without facing unpleasant consequences. For God's sake, what sort of mess do you think they'll make of the world, after an education like that—?"

He paused as if inviting comment, but Mr. Behrens found nothing to say. He wasn't particularly hopeful, himself, of the generation which was growing up round him.

"And for selfishness—read your newspapers. Fatuous go-slow strikes, when now's the moment, if ever, to be going fast. Mad industrial disputes, which not only do neither side any good, but which both sides *know* in advance will do nothing but harm. Do you think they're working to rule in China today?"

"I think they probably are," said Mr. Behrens. "Only it happens to be rather a different sort of rule."

Tabor ignored this. His knuckles showed white, as he gripped the arms of the chair.

"And fear," he said. "The smell of fear is everywhere. It rises like the steam off their backs, where they squat in the rain,

in Trafalgar Square. Squat like aborigines, rocking and moaning, in front of some ju-ju they are trying to propitiate."

Mr. Behrens thought, He's arguing with himself. And the real trouble is, he doesn't know whether he wants to win or lose. Half of him's on my side. One good pull, and I'll have him.

He said, " Aren't you overlooking one thing? And isn't it the one thing that matters? I'll take your own examples. I haven't much to say for the way we bring up children. But as for strikes and anti-nuclear demonstrations—we could, in theory, stop them if we wanted to. The executive has the power. It could break strikes with troops—and break up demonstrations with mounted policemen. But in practice it can't, and it doesn't, because we value freedom above expediency. It's taken us four hundred years to get there and, speaking for myself, I'm not prepared to abandon the position. Just because another country has tried a new system, and found that it's paid some quick dividends."

" Freedom," said Tabor. " You're prepared to accept inefficiency, selfishness, slackness, lack of purpose, timidity, and greed, provided you have, on the other side of the scales, a fictitious thing called freedom."

" Certainly," said Mr. Behrens. " And it isn't fictitious. You've spent part of your life in a police state. You'd know that if anyone did."

" It depends what you mean by a police state."

Mr. Behrens was desperately tired. But he could feel that Tabor was even tireder. If he had not been, he would not, perhaps, have presented him with such an opening.

" In Belgrade last year," he said, " a meeting was called. Not a political meeting. The question to be discussed was the formation of a new national theatre. The Government objected. They did not ban the meeting; they simply gave it out that they did not approve. Some hundreds of people came. Many because they had not heard of the ban. Some from idle curiosity, or even by mistake, because they happened to be passing and stopped to listen.

" As soon as the meeting started, the police blocked all exits. No one was allowed to leave until their name and address had been taken and confirmed. For some days nothing happened. Then the police visited every house on the list—every house—there were hundreds, so it took time—and broke every window in the house. No one of course dared to stop them, but one or two people did ask them why they were doing it, and they said, ' You make trouble for us, we make trouble for you.' It was midwinter, so it wasn't amusing. That's what I mean by a police state."

There was a long silence. Then Tabor said, "That's just a story you've heard."

"I can assure you that it's true," said Mr. Behrens sadly. "I was at the meeting myself."

Tabor got up, and started to pace up and down the room. Mr. Behrens said to himself, "I believe that's fixed him." It was at this moment that he heard the telephone ringing, out in the hall. Such was his preoccupation that it could have been ringing for some time. Tabor seemed to be unconscious of it, too.

The ringing stopped. There was a pause; then the door opened and Ruby came in. She was wearing a quilted dressing-gown, and a grey woollen scarf round her neck, on which her tousled head rested like a single cut flower. She looked indignant.

"If you're going to sit up nattering till three in the morning you might take your own telephone calls."

They both stared at her. Mr. Behrens had the irrelevant thought that when girls displayed their figures they often looked absurd. It was when they hid them that they always became attractive.

"It's for you," she said to Tabor. "Some geezer from London."

Tabor followed her out into the hall. Mr. Behrens put the last of the coal on to the fire and tried to shake off a sense of impending disaster.

It was a long five minutes before Tabor came back into the room. When he did so, Mr. Behrens knew, before he even opened his mouth, that something of decisive importance had happened.

Tabor said, "This evening your police, your trustworthy, non-political, judicially-controlled police, arrested Professor Mann, on a trumped-up charge of smuggling. He's in a cell in Cannon Row Police Station now."

Mr. Behrens could think of nothing to say.

"It looks as if I shall have a busy day tomorrow. I'm going to bed." Tabor went out again, shutting the door quietly, but firmly, behind him.

Mr. Behrens sat, for a long time, by the dying fire. He had no idea how it had been worked, but it seemed to him that the opposition was still a step ahead of them.

Presently he heard the sound for which he had been unconsciously waiting. The telephone was ringing. It was Mr. Fortescue. "Has Tabor heard the news?"

"About Professor Mann, yes."

"Somebody telephoned him?"

"About half an hour ago. It came at a most unfortunate moment."

"It was a clever piece of timing," said Mr. Fortescue. He sounded as if he was discussing the French defence to an attack on the Queen's rook side.

"It was certainly effective," said Mr. Behrens. "How did they do it?"

"Someone from their Embassy telephoned Scotland Yard and told them that Professor Mann had offered one of their Embassy servants eight ounces of cocaine, for payment in dollars. And that he was leaving England by air tomorrow. They had to do something, of course. The Professor was uncooperative. I believe he spat in the Superintendent's eye. So they pulled him in. He'll be released first thing tomorrow morning, with an apology."

"I'm afraid the harm may have been done," said Mr. Behrens. He was tired. Tireder than he could ever remember feeling in his life before, and something of this must have reached Mr. Fortescue. "I am sure you have done all that anyone could have done," he said; and then, as if embarrassed by this unusual display of sentiment, rang off.

Mr. Behrens crept upstairs to bed. There were only two guest-rooms. He had to pass Tabor's door to get to his own. The door was ajar, and Mr. Behrens could not help noticing, in the bright moonlight which was now streaming through the window, that Tabor's bed was empty and unused.

He can't have gone already, he thought. Or if he has, he won't get very far in this snow.

But he was too tired to worry any further about it. He fell into bed and to sleep.

When he woke next morning the sun was shining. He crept out of bed, and hobbled to the window. He felt as stiff as if the long struggle he had engaged in the night before had been a physical one. Outside he looked at a white world. Five miles away, the Ravenshoe Refinery stood out, black and sharp against the snowy hillside. He could even see, in clear silhouette, the curious outline of the catalytic cracker. It seemed to be grinning at him.

As he turned away, there was a knock at the door. Mr. Behrens snatched up a dressing-gown, and shouted, "Come in."

It was Ruby. "It's nearly ten o'clock," she said. "Dad sent me up to see if you wanted any breakfast."

"I'll be down in five minutes," said Mr. Behrens. "Is Mr. Tabor up yet?"

When Ruby failed to answer, Mr. Behrens looked up, and saw that her face was scarlet. He added, "I'm afraid we sat up very late last night. I'm only sorry if we kept you up as well."

Ruby sat down on the bed and started to cry softly. Mr. Behrens, being a sensible man, said nothing. He sat down beside her, and put his arm round her.

"Extraordinary," said Mr. Fortescue.

"It was the catalytic process," said Mr. Behrens. "Tabor explained it all to me that day at the refinery. A substance will stand up to any amount of heat and pressure by itself. But add one quite simple, outside ingredient and it will dissolve at once. In an oil refinery I understand that the thing they use most is china clay."

"And in this case, it was Ruby."

"She's a very nice girl," said Mr. Behrens. "They're getting married next week, and I've promised to be best man. Tabor's taking back his job at the refinery, until he can get some pure research work."

"And he's changed his mind about leaving us?"

"Oh, entirely. Ruby doesn't approve of Europe."

"I see," said Mr. Fortescue.

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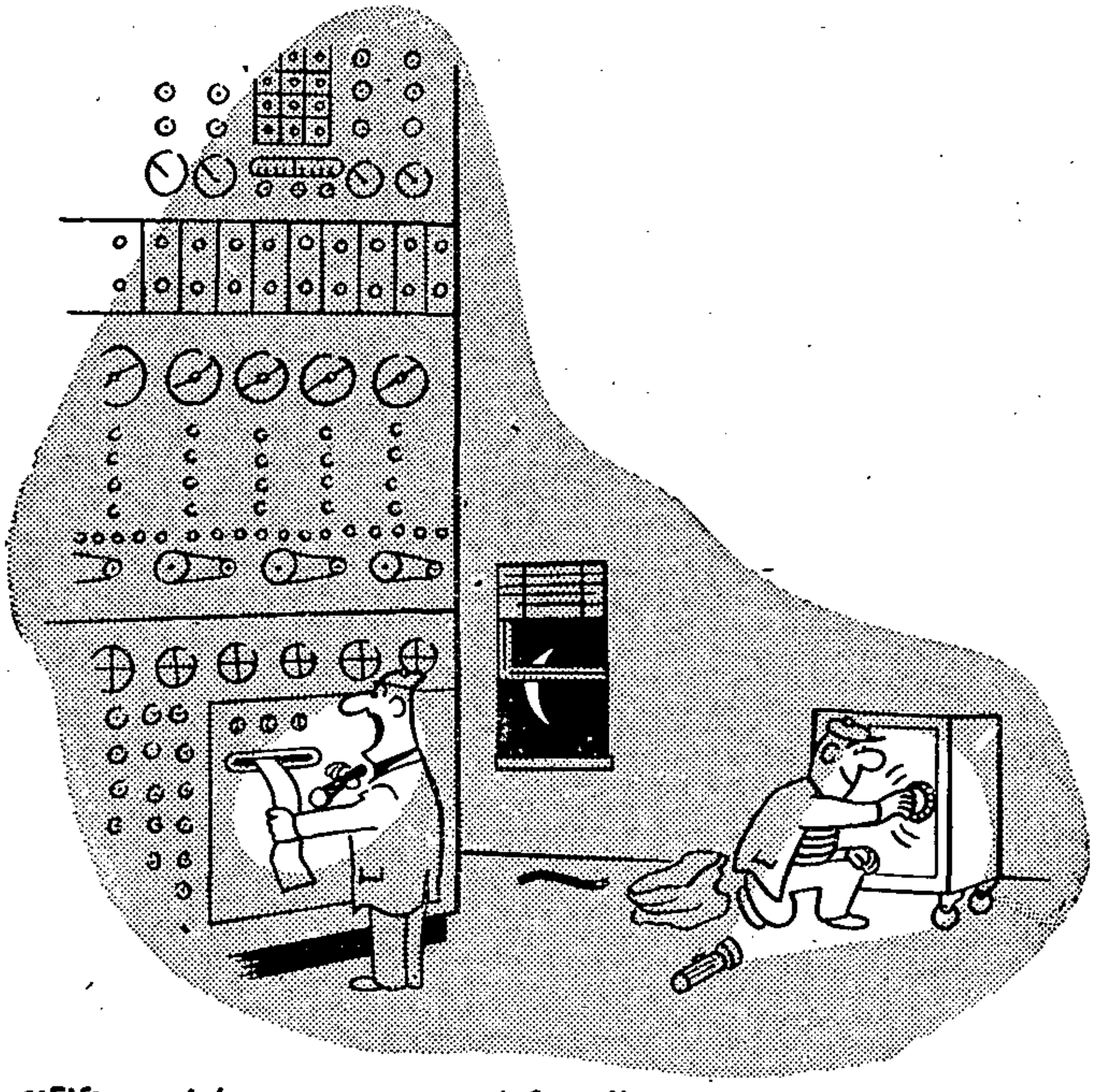

"Fifteen right, twenty-seven left. . ."

TAIL OF A SHRIMP

She had a cigarette between magenta coloured lips, and a glass of gin in her hand

BY DARRELL BATES

WHAT'S this?" my wife asked.

In the palm of her hand was the dry, desiccated tail of a shrimp. The ends were stained with what looked like magenta coloured lipstick, and round the middle was a piece of ribbon. Pink ribbon. As if that weren't enough, it was fixed to the shrimp's tail by a hairpin.

"Where on earth did you find it?" I was playing for time, of course. Time to think up a plausible explanation.

"In the pocket of your coat." She smiled without any noticeable sign of humour. "The one you wore last night."

"Oh," I said. I realised I wasn't doing very well. I took a deep breath.

"It's a charm," I said. "A magic charm."

"For what?"

"To keep a husband from going out with other girls . . ."

My wife looked at me for some time. She looked down at the thing in the palm of her hand. Then she looked at me again. "I don't believe you," she said.

"It's true," I said. And as a matter of fact it was.

The night before, I had been to a dinner in London. One of these reunion dinners that men are so fond of and that wives accept or more or less accept as one of the hazards of marriage, like golf or an addiction to cricket. During the war I had been in one of those under-cover rackets that sounded glamorous but usually weren't, but that with luck took one abroad sometimes to rather out of the way places. It had been a small outfit and there weren't more than a dozen of us at the dinner. There were one or two speeches, a lot of Do-you-remember, old-boy? and a fair amount of liquor.

Afterwards someone said, "I know a place in Holland Park. Let's go there."

"What sort of place?" I asked. The outfit had somehow

attracted an odd independent lot of chaps, and even now after all these years I was one of the few it seemed who had settled down with a regular job and a wife and family.

"Oh, you know," he said. "You can drink all night, and there's a band from Martinique, and plenty of girls—"

"No," I said. "I think I'll push off now."

"Oh, come on," they said. "It'll do you good. You're getting in a rut."

I shook my head. I didn't want to seem a prig but I thought it was time I went home.

"You don't have to get involved." The "have to," I thought, was rather heavily underlined.

I shook my head, and got up to go.

"I'll tell you what," said a man called Laronde, "I know someone there who will give you a charm that will guarantee to keep you on the straight and narrow."

"Have you tried it?"

The others laughed. Laronde was what they call a lady's man.

"Yes," he said. "As a matter of fact, I have." He didn't smile, and his face, for a moment, was quiet and serious.

"And did it work?"

"Yes," he said, "it worked."

"All right," I said. I suppose I had had too much brandy, but I was curious too. I had seen magic charms at work in Africa and in the Far East, and it was a subject that intrigued me.

"All right," I said again. "But heaven help you if it fails."

"Amen," they said and off we went.

From the outside at one o'clock in the morning it looked like the house of a maiden aunt. Even the lady who opened the door looked like a maiden aunt, and it wasn't until she led the way into the basement that the atmosphere of prosperous Victorian respectability finally disappeared.

The room was full of smoke and people and talk and music, but just as we arrived the noise suddenly faded, and the people moved away from the middle of the floor and crowded against the walls. They were waiting for something and there was a curious air of tension in the basement room. We stopped on the steps, and watched and waited.

The lights went out suddenly, and in the darkness a saxophone began to play. Gradually a spotlight moved across the floor until it reached a single, impassive figure waiting there. But it wasn't the saxophonist. It was a girl, and she had nothing on.

When she had finished her song, and the lights went on again, I went across to Laronde. "Where's that charm?" I asked.

"I hadn't forgotten," he said. "Come with me."

A few minutes later I was sitting in a small side room with a thin copper-skinned woman in a tight-fitting green frock. She had a cigarette between magenta coloured lips, and a glass of gin in her hand.

"All right," she said. "I fix." She spoke English with a curious accent. I gave her a pound. She opened her bag and took from it a small sack made of skin. She emptied the contents on the table. Pieces of bark, I saw, and ribbons of various colours, and some bones and shells and things that looked like twigs. And several other oddments.

She picked up the dry, desiccated tail of shrimp, and took the cigarette out of her mouth.

"Yes," she said, looking at me, "this will do." She rubbed it gently with her fingers and her lips moved, but I couldn't hear what she said. Then she put the object between her lips, and they still moved and muttered.

Finally she took the thing out of her mouth, and twisted a piece of ribbon round the middle of it. She took a hairpin from her own head, and licked it, and held it poised in her hand.

She looked at me then. Her eyes were like a long dark alley with a lamp at the end. Suddenly, with a noise that came from the back of her throat, she transfixed the ribbon and the tail of the shrimp with the pin.

She stood up and put the thing in the pocket of my coat.

"Go and enjoy yourself."

When I got back to the big basement room I went to the bar. I needed a drink. All the others, I saw, were dancing and gossiping in groups along the side of the wall. I couldn't see Laronde at all.

The girl behind the bar, the one who served the drinks, fitted her frock like a ripe plum. Her skin was the same sort of colour, with a summer gloss on it and highlights.

"Rum and soda, please," I said.

"Yes." She reached for the bottle and the soda without taking her eyes off me. I patted the pocket of my coat and wondered whether it was just a pound down the drain. The charm didn't seem to be having much effect on anyone, including me.

"How much?" I asked.

But the only answer I got was more eyes and a plum that asked to be picked. I knew that I should never have come, or believed Laronde and his stupid charms. I put my hands on the edge of the bar to still the shaking in them.

Suddenly the girl put her hand across her mouth and backed away slowly until she stood against the wall of bottles. Her eyes were on my hands, and in her eyes now was quite a different look. A look that was partly anger and partly fear.

I looked down at my hands. In putting them on the bar one of my fingers had slipped so that only the knuckle showed between the fingers on either side. I took my hands away from the bar. After a moment I picked up my drink and went away.

I joined a group of the chaps on the other side of the room.

I stayed there drinking for about an hour. Partly because of the passage of time, and partly I suppose because of the liquor, I gradually forgot all about the charm in my pocket.

Suddenly a pair of hands came unseen from behind my chair and fastened over my eyes. I reached up to remove the hands. They were soft warm hands, and when I had succeeded in detaching them from my eyes I saw that they were Scandinavian hands. A sort of golden-brown flecked faintly with fair hair. When I turned my head I saw that the rest of the owner was like that too.

" My name is Greta," she said. " I am Swedish."

She came round and sat on my lap. I didn't ask her to, but it's true I didn't exactly push her off. She sat there and sipped my drink, and then quite suddenly she slid away and collapsed in a heap on the floor.

They picked her up, and soon she was on her feet again. " Passed out, I expect," someone said, but she had seemed sober enough I thought when she arrived.

She didn't look at me or say anything after that, and soon she drifted away.

Odd, I thought, and wondered whether it wasn't time that I went home.

Just then the lights went out, and the lonely saxophonist started to play as had happened when we first arrived; and soon the spotlight appeared weaving and wavering around the room until it settled on the figure of the girl standing in the middle of the floor.

It was the same girl, and she still had nothing on. But this time somehow it was different. The flesh seemed cold and clammy like a plucked chicken, and the face looked tired and worn and rather nasty. Perhaps it was because I was nearer this time, and the light was different. I wasn't sure what the reason was, but I was glad when the dance was over and the lights went on again.

" I'm going home," I said. And this time I meant it. I got a taxi and by half past three I was safely home. My wife was

asleep, but she had left a flask of hot black coffee and beside it a packet of aspirin.

When I told my wife this story she smiled. Whether she believed it or not, I don't know. Her smile gave nothing away.

A few months later I went out to another male reunion. In the course of the evening, when I put my hand in my pocket to fish out some cigarettes, I touched something. Something hard and dry and cold. I took it out and saw that it was the desiccated tail of the shrimp and the ribbon and hairpin.

And it certainly wasn't I that had put it there.

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THE MISSING CUCKOO

This yéar the cuckoo has not come to us;
Or else a cuckoo came and he was dúmb.
Ah, when will our Spring come?

This year, the cuckoo has not come to us;
And yet the people say,
Down Essex way,
They have already heard
More than sufficient of the tedious bird;
And there are lots,
According to the news, in Notts;
Whereas in Bucks
Cuckoos are commoner than ducks.
Also there issues from a part of Flint
An ugly hint
That local cuckoos have begun to stutter—
They had so much to utter.
And even farther north
Beyond the Firth of Forth
The cuckoo tunes his note to Caledonian ears
And brings the rugged Scot to tears.
Ah, lucky men and happy counties these!
This year he did not come to us.
And now the days are long,
And the willow weeps for lack of song.
Has Highgate ceased to please?
Or, Cuckoo, did your little engine fail,
Breasting a gale
Over the narrow seas?

E. V. RIEU

As others see us

For Allah created the English mad—the maddest of all mankind.
RUDYARD KIPLING

England is the last home of the aristocracy, and the art of protecting
the aristocracy from the encroachments of commerce
has been raised to quite an art,
Because in America a rich butter-and-egg man is only a rich butter-
and-egg man or at most an honorary LL.D. of some hungry
university, but in England why before he knows it he is Sir
Benjamin Buttery, Bart.
Anyhow, I think the English people are sweet,
And we might as well get used to them because when they slip
and fall they always land on their own or somebody else's
feet.

OGDEN NASH, *England Expects*

Tips for Travellers

It is slightly annoying to the English to be told that their English accent is "perfect" or "sweet" or "cute," since the Englishman rightly believes that he alone has no accent whatever . . .

U.S. visitors must, of course, go to Lord's—sacred-shrine-of-cricket, in an attitude of gentlemanly respect and alert anticipation. If they find while watching the game that for the first twenty minutes absolutely nothing happens, they should not comment on the fact that absolutely nothing happens . . .

After forty minutes, if a batsman scores one run, it is coarse U.S.manship to say, "Would Di Mag have powdered that one!"

Just say, "Wow" . . .

When going to a British Railway station, do not *say* anything about the relative miseries of these spots, but bring galoshes, blankets, air cushion, packet of sandwiches, and own coffee in a Thermos. It is quite a good ploy in England to be seen constantly carrying about coffee in a Thermos.

STEPHEN POTTER, *One-Upmanship*

Divine Right

Of all the sarse that I can call to mind,
England doos *make the most onpleasant kind:*
It's you're the sinner ollers, she's the saint;
Wut's good's all English, all that isn't ain't.

J. R. LOWELL

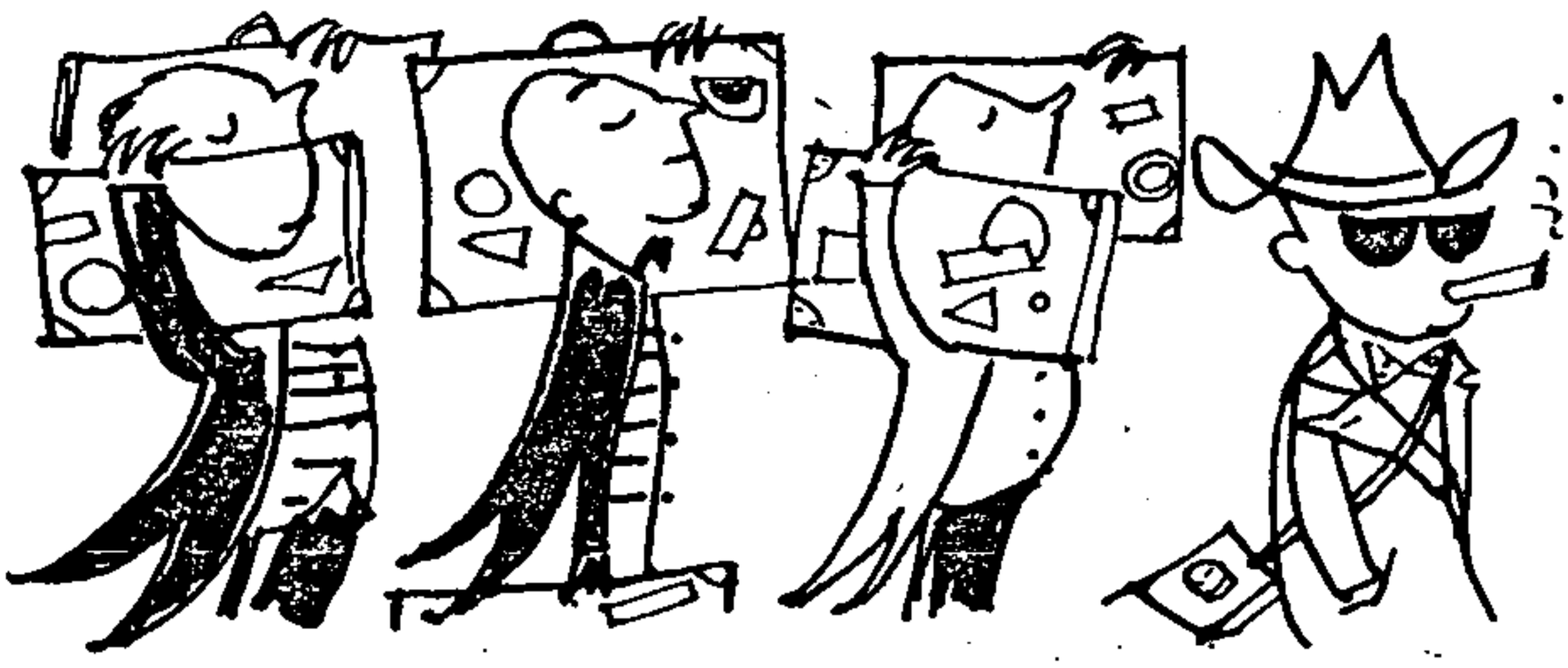
Odd Bods

It was an old objection to the Englishman abroad that he made himself too much at home. He was accused of treating a first-class foreign hotel as if it were only a fourth-class English hotel . . . I can understand the Englishman asking for English things; the odd thing is that it was not for the most English things that he asked . . . When he asked for a drink, he asked for a Scotch drink; he even submitted to the intolerable national humiliation of calling it Scotch. When he asked for a game, he asked for a Scotch game; he looked to see whole landscapes transformed by the game of golf; which he himself had hardly played for ten years . . . a mystery to be added to what is perhaps the most mysterious national character in Christendom.

G. K. CHESTERTON, *On The Englishman Abroad*

"Clothes! Take all the clothes you've got. The more the better. Take one suitcase; the butler sneers, the footmen giggle, the under house-maids have hysterics. Take fifty and they'll treat you like the Duke of Westminster."

A. G. MACDONELL, *England, Their England*



PROMISE

by Jan Cox Speas

PA SAID he doubted if I'd ever be a man. He said it so many times I almost came to believe him, and sometimes I wonder what would have happened to us—Pa sneering at my failings and hating me for them, and me hating myself for not being what he wanted—if it hadn't been for Aunt Susan and Jo Page and the thing that happened that long ago September of my sixteenth birthday.

It seemed to me I had been waiting for ever to be sixteen. Sixteen, old enough to handle my share of the work on the farm and to take my share of the money after the cotton was sold, according to Pa's promise. Old enough to choose my way of doing a thing and, what's more important, willing to back it up as a man should.

It was a golden word, sixteen, but Pa gave me to understand I was a fool to put too much faith in words. Or promises, for that matter.

"I'll not take a boy in shares with me," Pa kept saying. "Sixteen is only a word, when all's said, and if you're not enough of a man by then I'm not obliged to keep the promise."

Aunt Susan didn't approve. She told me I was wrong to bargain with Pa over a thing which couldn't be measured. "Who can say when a boy grows to be a man?" she'd ask. Then she'd flicker a look at Pa, her eyes bright with anger, as blue and smoking as the flame on the end of a candle. "Some men never grow up, if you want my opinion."

"Nobody asked your opinion, Susan," Pa would say impatiently.

I didn't want Aunt Susan to take my part; it was a thing

between Pa and me, and between us we must settle it. But I could not bring myself to hurt her by saying so.

"Drive yourself, George Stewart," she'd go on, "but leave David alone. You can't make him over to suit yourself."

"It's not your place to say," Pa answered coolly.

"It's my duty to take the place of his mother."

Whenever she mentioned my mother, Pa's face would change.

It was like a curtain going shut across his eyes, and the shape of his mouth seeming instead to be lines of hard granite. Only his voice remained the same, plainly showing his contempt.

"That's the way of women, David. They'll make a man weak and sap the very life from him. You'll learn not to lean on them, else you'll be no good to yourself or me the rest of your days."

Usually it ended there, but one night that hot September Aunt Susan and Pa went at it until the anger between them was a thing you could almost see, both of them putting into hurting words the thoughts they'd kept to themselves before.

It frightened my sister Mary, who was only eight and a very small eight at that, and I looked at the tremble on her mouth and wished I knew a way to comfort her with Pa's eyes upon us both.

"You're not here to tell me how to raise my kids," Pa said. "Remember that and keep your place."

"I know the place you'd give me," Aunt Susan said. "You'd have me cook and wash and sew and scrub, like any kitchen drudge, and never raise my voice against the man of the house. Well, you chose the wrong woman, George. You can't frighten me into blind obedience, and you can't stop me from doing the things Molly would have wanted done for her children."

"They're my kids," Pa said harshly, "and I'll do with them as I please. Take it or leave it, Susan, you've no other choice."

Aunt Susan's hair was black and her eyes as deeply blue as our Carolina skies; I thought she was the prettiest woman I had ever seen, and wondered how Pa could stand against her so firmly.

"If Molly had lived," she said, "she couldn't bear it. No woman could. You're my brother and I love your children, but if you keep on, George, you'll drive me away." She added quietly, "Maybe you did that to her. It's enough to kill a woman."

There was no sound in the kitchen. No one moved. No one seemed to breathe. We must look like the pictures in the Bible in the front parlour, I thought, stiff and frozen for ever in the positions we had held when Aunt Susan's words caught us unawares.

Ma had been dead for all of four years, and Mary had no memory of her at all. But I could remember something of those happy days when Ma was alive; and if it were not a memory, but only a dream I had made for myself, still I was sure Pa loved her and treated her tenderly.

Then Pa took a deep breath and the spell was broken. A tear ran down Mary's face, and then another. I took a bite of pie and it filled my throat like a clod of dry earth.

"Do you think I'm blind?" Pa said at last. "Do you think I don't know why you're staying? You'll live under my roof as long as it suits your purpose, and when he whistles you'll go running to him like any common—"

"Hold your tongue," Aunt Susan warned.

"I'll not have him in the family," Pa went on stubbornly. "You may as well forget him, it'll never come to anything."

"Are you asking me to leave, George?"

Pa said hotly, "I'm asking you to stop seeing Jo Page!"

"You're asking me to choose between the two of you, and you know the answer as well as I."

So it was Jo Page, our neighbour, they were quarrelling about. Once, before Ma died, Jo and Pa had been friends, but Pa's dislike had grown over the years until none of us could say where it began or where it would end.

"Why do you hate him so?" Aunt Susan asked. "What has he ever done to you?"

I knew it was no use. Could Pa put his contempt into words, or his reasons for feeling it whenever he looked at Jo? Could he explain, even in anger, why he despised gentleness in a man, or the habit of laughter, or Jo's way of living life as if he enjoyed every minute of it?

Pa said, "Hate him?" His laugh had so much of a sneer in it that Aunt Susan winced. "He's not worth a good honest hate. Not worth much of anything, if it comes to that."

Pa often said the same thing in town, before all Jo Page's friends and neighbours. I'd heard the same sneer in his voice when he said that Jo was as mealy as an old potato, and surely it was a shame the good Lord had forgotten to give him more gumption when He passed out the fancy wrappings. Whatever Jo did, Pa found occasion to ridicule him; however he farmed his land, Pa pointed out the fault in his methods. And if other men defended Jo, or if Jo's place yielded as good a profit as any farm in the county, Pa's sneer grew wider and his contempt louder.

What Jo Page thought of Pa's taunts, I was never sure. But sometimes I wondered if it wasn't Aunt Susan holding him back when another man might well have been provoked to violence.

And now Aunt Susan defended Jo as she defended me, cheeks stained red with anger. "He's more of a man than you, George, and maybe you know it. Is that what's prodding you inside?"

Mary could stand it no longer. She pushed back her chair and ran out, her thin shoulders hunched. I got up at once to follow her, knowing she would hide and cry until she'd be too upset to sleep when bedtime came.

"Sit down, David," Pa ordered. "Leave her be. You've babied her as much as Susan has." His eyes moved over me, distaste in his look and disgust shaping his voice. "Did you learn that from your friend Jo Page?"

It was a hard thing to understand. Pa gentled his stock and cared little for the man who used a rougher hand; yet he could not see that the same surely applied to Mary, a small girl who needed nothing more than a bit of gentling now and then.

"Leave whenever you please, Susan," Pa said flatly. "Nobody's holding back. But while you're in my house, you'll do as I say."

He turned and strode from the room, ducking his head to go through the door, and Aunt Susan began to clear the table.

"He didn't mean it," I said softly. "He didn't mean you to go."

Aunt's Susan's voice was weary. "No, David, he didn't mean it. If I left tonight, he'd be the first to go and fetch me back again."

I walked to the window and watched Pa cross the yard, heading for the barn. As always, I felt a stirring of pride because he was my pa. A big man, biggest in the county except for Jo Page, and even in the dust I could see the muscles straining against his shirt, his wide shoulders, the easy way he had of walking that kept his strength and size from being a burden.

"Looking from here," I said slowly, "you'd almost think he was Jo."

Except for the hair. Pa's was dark, while Jo Page could be seen and known a mile away for his yellow head. I could still remember the first time I saw Jo, ploughing his east field under the noon sun, his brown shoulders dripping wet and his yellow hair so bright it hurt your eyes to see it, and all the time singing at the top of his lungs to the team till they could surely hear him clear over in the next county.

"Yes, they're almost of a size," Aunt Susan said.

But I knew she was thinking that Jo Page and Pa were set apart by more important things than the stretch of a man's shoulder or the colour of his hair.

"I'll go find Mary," I said. "It's getting dark."

"David," Aunt Susan said, "Jo is waiting by the branch. Will you tell him I'm too busy to see him tonight?"

I nodded and went out into the twilight. The shadows were thick beneath the chinaberry trees and the barn loomed up black against the sky, but nowhere could I see the flash of white dress which might tell me Mary's hiding-place.

Beyond the backyard a path climbed the hill between blackberry

thickets and disappeared in the woods where it followed an old fence to the branch. There the path ended on the edge of the water, and the ferns and trees grew in a thick green circle.

It was a pleasant spot, but I had no great wish to meet Jo Page there. He would be expecting Aunt Susan and he would get only me, and it was less than a man deserved on a warm, sweet-smelling September night.

But I did not have to go to the branch. Jo Page came down through the woods, carrying Mary on his shoulders. Her legs were crossed under his neck and she kept a tight grip on his yellow hair; and she was laughing, her sorrows forgotten for the moment.

Jo bent and put her on the ground. "It must be bedtime," he said. "Here's your brother out to fetch you home." Mary thanked him and skipped on down the hill, and Jo rested his arms on the fence beside me.

"How goes it, David?"

I had picked close to two hundred pounds of cotton that day, and Pa had beat me by half that again. It looked like the weather might hold; the crop was the best in years and the prices high; Pa had heard in town the old Brown place was up for sale and intended to buy ten acres bordering us on the south.

All those things came to mind at his question, and I longed to lean on the fence next to Jo and discuss them as men will who are friends and neighbours.

But I only said, "Aunt Susan can't come tonight."

"Too bad," said Jo. "It's a nice night." He reached in his pocket for pipe and tobacco, and in a moment he struck a match.

We looked at each other in the brief light. Jo's face was brown from the sun and his features were strong and clean, in the way of a carved piece of seasoned wood when the hand holding the knife has been sure and steady. But there was something else, something quiet and disciplined about him that showed, more than his face, the manner of man he was.

The match flickered out. "I'll go over and speak to your pa tomorrow," he said.

"He won't be pleased."

"It's gone on long enough," Jo said quietly.

I did not want to make apologies for Pa, and yet I did not agree with him; it was a difficult thing to know what to say.

"It might come to blows before you're done," I said slowly.

"I hope not," said Jo, "but I'll have to chance it."

I hoped the same, for it would make Aunt Susan unhappy. But the betraying thought came into my head that it would be something grand to see, Jo Page and Pa fighting it to a finish.

Jo said nothing for a long while. We watched the fireflies come closer under the trees and smelled the honeysuckle still warm from the day's sun, and I wished I could ask Jo's advice. Maybe he would know how a son could please his Pa, as a son should, and yet keep pride and respect enough for himself.

But I did not ask him, and knew I never would.

"Don't blame your pa, David," Jo said at last. "When the world turns a man bitter, it's natural for him to want to strike back."

I was not sure I understood him. "It's you who'll blame him," I said, "if things don't work out as you plan."

Jo laughed in his easy way and said, "Good night, David. Give Sue my love, and tell her I'll see her at noon tomorrow."

I walked back to the house, thinking of Jo and Aunt Susan, and in the near darkness I almost stumbled over Mary.

"I waited for you, David," she whispered.

It twisted my heart that Mary should be so afraid of Pa, and she the small one of the family. "Pa's mare makes a great noise," I said, taking her hand, "but I've seen you riding her down the road with nothing but a blanket beneath you."

"She's a contrary animal, David, but I know her ways."

"Pa has a stubborn way or two," I said gently, "but you must learn not to cry when he raises his voice. He'll not hurt you, any more than the old mare."

Mary chuckled and went off to bed with her fears and sorrows once more forgotten. I went into the kitchen, there to find Aunt Susan with her arms white with flour and her hands plopping a big circle of dough on the table.

"I thought I'd do my baking tonight," she said, not looking at me. "It's much cooler after dark."

"Aunt Susan," I said carefully, "has Pa always been the same?"

After a long moment she said, "He always had a rough way of talking, even when he was a boy. And too much pride, because he had his growth early and was afraid of nothing in all the world. But he laughed often, David, and he had a good heart." She added, the words a little bewildered, "I thought your mother would mind his manners for him, and gentle him, and smooth away some of the rougher edges."

"Maybe it was that way," I said. "I don't remember him talking roughly to Ma, not once."

"But he's worse than ever he was before. Cruel and bitter, and determined to have his way, wrong or right."

I did not like the look of desperation about her, and so I gave her Jo's message, word for word. She caught her breath and

the crimson came back to her cheeks; her eyes were suddenly very blue and bright with a mischief as young as Mary's.

She began to laugh, and I joined her. There we stood, laughing together, not caring that we had no reason for heedless laughter and much cause for sober reflection.

"We won't feel so gay tomorrow," Aunt Susan said finally. "Your pa will be furious."

She was very likely right. But we went up to bed with a fine feeling of anticipation, and it seemed a long time until noon of the next day.

The next day dawned hot and clear. I wanted to tell Pa that Jo was coming so that he could straighten matters out in his mind, but there was plenty of cotton still to be picked and Pa liked to get his work done with no talk to hinder him. Beyond a few grunts now and then we didn't speak all morning, and I decided Pa could take care of himself without thinking about it beforehand.

Never was a morning so long. But it was a good day. I took off my shirt to feel the hot sun on my back, and above me the sky was quiet and high and arched as blue as a china bowl. The shadow of a chicken hawk moved over us once, and I could smell the resin from the green pines beyond the field. Working two rows at a time, hands quick and eyes steady, I filled my bag almost as soon as Pa.

When the sun was finally overhead, Pa straightened and said, "Time to eat."

We walked to the back porch and Pa worked the pump while I washed. Then I did the same for him, and we each took a long cool drink of water from the old gourd dipper.

"You'll make a farmer yet, David," Pa said, and surprised me by smiling a little.

We looked at each other—Pa standing a good three inches taller—and at that moment it was easy for me to forget the things between us, to know there were few things in the world better than working a field with Pa and coming home in the heat of the day to drink a cool draught of well water together.

Then Aunt Susan called us to the table and the moment was gone, and I remembered Jo Page was coming.

He came before we had finished eating, his arrival announced by the cheerful jingle of bells.

"What's he doing coming here?" Pa asked, his eyes narrowed as he looked at each of us in turn.

No one answered, and no one asked how Pa knew it to be Jo Page. Pa had said a dozen times that only Jo would be fool

enough to put bells on his horse, and now those bells sounded on the silent air like small trumpets coming before him.

But I knew Jo had come in his buggy not to provoke Pa but to please Aunt Susan. Once he had told us, with considerable amusement, that his grey mare was a vain, self-centred female who required a few fripperies now and then, and besides that he fancied the sound of bells himself. Aunt Susan and I had laughed, and now I saw the anxious shape of her mouth relax, as Jo had surely intended.

Pa stood up. "I don't want him here," he said to Aunt Susan. "I don't want him hanging around you or the kids."

"Then you must tell him yourself," she answered quietly.

"That I will," Pa said, "and I'll make sure he listens."

When Pa stepped off the back porch, we were behind him; but I halted Aunt Susan under the chinaberries, and Mary slipped her hand in mine.

Jo swung down to the ground and turned towards Pa, and in all the world there was no sound but the faint ringing of bells as Jo's mare tossed her head or switched her tail after flies.

"You've got no business here," Pa said calmly enough.

"Don't be hasty, George. I came for a friendly talk."

"I don't want the likes of you around my place," Pa said, "bothering Susan and the kids."

"It seems to me we have a few things to settle," Jo said easily.

Pa's temper was short; he flexed his hands and moved them over his thighs. "Get on your way. There's nothing to settle."

"We're neighbours," Jo said. "Maybe you don't count me as a friend, but it's too soon for you to count me an enemy."

The droning of a bee above me in the tree was as loud as thunder. Pa's very silence was like an insult; the sun glared down on the yard, hot and quiet, and Jo Page's eyes darkened. Aunt Susan drew a sharp breath beside me and I pitied her for being a woman and not knowing the full pleasure of the moment.

Jo said quietly, "I'd like to marry Sue. Do I have your approval?"

Pa's neck was red and his muscles began to tighten. "You've got more nerve than sense," he said. "A bigger fool than I figured."

Aunt Susan spoke, her voice as clear and cold as rainwater dropping into the sullen heat. "We don't need anyone's approval," she said, looking not at Pa but at Jo. "I'll go with you any time you say. Now, if it pleases you."

Pa stared at Aunt Susan, his face hard and his eyes oddly stunned and bleak. Until that moment, I think, he did not believe she would go against him.

Then he looked back at Jo. "Take her," he said, "and be sure you keep her. I want nothing to do with either of you from this day on."

Mary's hand pulled free of mine and she ran into the sunlight, pulling at Pa's arm.

"Pa, let me go with Aunt Susan," she cried, her voice high and trembly. "I want to go with Jo and Aunt Susan!"

Too late to stop Mary's foolish words, too late to stop Pa's big hand that cuffed her on the side of the face and sent her sprawling in the dust. But not too late for Jo and me; I took a step forward, without thinking, and so did Jo.

But nothing happened. Aunt Susan was there between Jo and Pa, looking up at Pa, not a mite afraid of him. "I won't have you fighting!" she said furiously. "I'll go, George, and I'll take Mary with me. You'll be rid of both of us!"

At first I thought Pa would push her out of his way. I was out of patience with her myself. We had built ourselves up to a proper battle, Jo and Pa and I; and Aunt Susan, in the way of a woman, had spoilt it for us. The day had gone as tasteless as a glass of scuppernong wine when the fermenting has been halted too soon.

"Get moving," Pa said, looking at Jo over Aunt Susan's dark curls. Then he turned on his heel and spoke to me. "You've wasted enough time," he said shortly. "Get out to the field."

He brushed past me and strode towards the barn, and I watched Jo as he put his hands on Aunt Susan's shoulders. "I'm sorry it had to be this way, Sue," he said. "Are you certain you want to come with me now?"

She nodded valiantly.

"Go and change," Jo said gently. "I've arranged everything."

He watched her go back into the house, and the smile on his mouth did not reach his eyes. "Well, David," he said ruefully, "you were right about the talking."

"You tried," I said. "It couldn't be helped." After a moment I added, "I'll go with you. Aunt Susan shouldn't be married with none of her family there."

Jo's eyes were steady. "You'll have to tell your pa."

Yes, I would have to tell Pa. While Jo took Mary over to see the bells on his mare, I went inside the barn.

Pa's voice came out of the dimness. "I told you to go back to work."

I waited until I could see him, my eyes straining after the bright sunlight I had left. He was leaning against the wall, rubbing his fist with his hand, and it surprised me to find him doing nothing but standing there.

I cleared my throat. "I'm going into town with Jo and Aunt Susan," I said. "One of us ought to stand up with her on her wedding day."

Pa raised his head. "And if I tell you not to go?"

I took time to examine his words, but his voice was flat, with no feeling of any kind in it, and his face was like granite.

"I'm going, Pa," I said, "no matter what you say."

Now he will get his chance to strike a blow, I thought, and braced myself for Pa's heavy fist. Or else he will tell me not to come back at all, and of the two I would rather take the fist.

But he only said, "Go on, then. You're like all the rest of them. Mealy-mouthed and soft as a woman, letting yourself be led around by the nose like some dumb hulk of a cow."

Pa's face was white, his eyes so black and clear I could almost see the pain in them. And the pain was so unexpected that I could think of no words to say, or find voice to say them were they on the edge of my tongue.

"I'll get along without you," Pa went on harshly. He straightened up and hit his fist against the wall. "Without anybody, if need be. That's the best way, the only way for a man."

He went past me as if he didn't see me, and I was left alone in the barn to cope with all the strange and confusing thoughts jostling in my mind.

But there was no time to think my way clear. I went back into the yard and saw Aunt Susan in the buggy, wearing a white dress and a hat trimmed with pink roses the shade of her cheeks. I climbed over her and took Mary in my lap, but I did not speak.

Jo took the reins and spoke to the mare, and we moved out of the yard. The road stretched clear to the woods; no single thing moved in all that distance, only the shimmer of heat and the feel of silence thick enough to touch with my hand.

"Don't feel badly, David," Aunt Susan said. "You're not to blame."

I smiled at her as I would have smiled at Mary. "Pa and I'll set it right," I said. "Don't you worry."

"Maybe we should have waited," she said unhappily. "I didn't want it to be like this."

I hated to see her so anxious and sad, for I'd heard it said that a woman treasures the memory of her wedding day for many a year. But when we arrived at the parsonage, the minister was waiting as Jo had arranged it, and Aunt Susan lifted her chin and smiled shyly and went in to her wedding with as bright an air as any bride in the county.

I imagine it was much the same as all other weddings, but I'll not forget the sweet way of Aunt Susan's mouth and the look

Jo gave her when he put the ring on her finger. And I thought of Pa's words, and wished the minister could say a bit of a prayer for me, that I might in truth be old enough to choose the right or wrong of a matter for myself, as I had done.

When we left the parsonage, we saw that the long hot spell stood fair to be broken. A high wind pushed through the pines and shook the live oaks with a rough hand, and above the trees the sky was dark and threatening with rain to come.

Jo remarked that he must stop at Horace Brown's store before going home. He had become a married man so suddenly, he said ruefully, that he found himself short of tobacco for his pipe. And that would never do, since his new wife might grow accustomed to a house without tobacco and in the future send him out behind the barn whenever he took a hankering for his pipe.

Aunt Susan smiled and said, "I like the smell of pipe smoke," and she and Jo looked at each other for a long time. Indeed, I was obliged to halt the mare before the store or Jo would have gone straight home without his tobacco and never missed it, I'll be bound, for the better part of a week.

"I won't be long," Jo said to Aunt Susan. "Don't move until I come back."

I laughed. "I'll get your tobacco and you won't have to leave her for a single minute."

Mary, who had been squirming on my lap with delighted excitement, sat up suddenly. "Why, David," she said, "there's the old mare. Whatever is she doing in town?"

We all looked at the mare. No doubt about it, it was Pa's contrary old animal; and we knew very well that only Pa would have ridden her to town and left her tied to a post before the store.

Beside me, Aunt Susan's shoulders slumped; all the joy seemed to drain from her, leaving her pale and anxious. Mary took my hand, and Jo laid the reins in Aunt Susan's lap and stepped down from the buggy.

"I won't be long," he said again. "Hold the mare steady, Susan."

"Jo," she said, close to pleading, "must you go in?"

Jo looked up at her. "Yes, I must," he said very gently. "I won't do without my tobacco because of George."

He smiled and turned away. But I knew that tobacco was more excuse than reason; if Jo was slave to any habit, it was that of facing his problems squarely, as a man should. And so I put Mary aside and followed Jo up the steps.

The screen door slipped from my hand and the wind slammed it shut behind us with a noise that shook the building.

"Well, well," Pa's voice struck out at us, "look what the wind blew in."

He was standing with a group of men at the back of the store, and from the uncomfortable look on each face, I knew they had been discussing Jo Page. But Pa's face held no expression; it was still white and hard, making his eyes glitter like polished black stones, and not once did he look at me.

"Good to see you, Jo," Horace Brown said, shifting the plug of tobacco in his mouth. "What can I do for you?"

As if Horace had not spoken, Pa said, "This town's going to have to do something about the rubbish littering the road. A good wind comes up, the garbage blows right inside."

Somebody snickered. Jo said quietly, "I'm out of tobacco, Horace. Better give me a couple of pounds, the same mixture as always."

Pa walked forward, slowly and heavily. I didn't want to look at him; I felt sick inside, with a cold pain I had never felt before.

"What's the matter?" he asked harshly. "You not speaking to people these days? Feeling too high and mighty for the rest of us?" He laughed, a bleak, hurting thing. "Come on, Jo, no hard feelings. You got yourself a good woman, but don't let it weigh on your conscience that you stole her. It's dog eat dog, Jo, and a sneaky man's as good as the next one."

Jo turned round slowly and looked at Pa. I saw Horace Brown's jaws freeze, for the length of that look, before they began to move again. The other men moved up, waiting, faces eager and curious.

And suddenly I knew that it was all wrong. Wrong for Pa, standing there with his bitterness and hatred written in his face for all the gaping world to see and judge. Wrong for me to be siding with Jo Page against my own pa. And above all, wrong for Jo, who was taking Aunt Susan home on her wedding day.

But I did not have to speak. Jo Page thought for himself and spoke for himself as well.

"I'll see you another time, George," he said calmly, "and we'll discuss our differences." He paid Horace for the tobacco and we walked to the door.

"You a coward, Jo Page?" Pa shouted behind us. "Yellow all the way through?"

Jo paused at the door. "Maybe you don't mind charging admission," he said to Pa, "but I intend to keep my affairs private."

Pa had no answer to that, and we went to the buggy and climbed in, and Jo drove out of town without looking back. He acted as if nothing had happened or was likely to happen; it

was Aunt Susan's wedding day and all was right with the world. Jo Page would have it no other way.

Jo's house was that of a bachelor, clean and sparse, but Aunt Susan soon set out a fine meal for us. We were all very gay and laughed a great deal, and if Jo Page ate sparingly and fell silent more than once, I was certain no one noticed it but myself, who felt a similar weight of thought upon me.

The store was no place for Pa and Jo to settle their differences, I kept telling myself. Jo had done the right thing. And as Aunt Susan would say, a fight settled nothing and grown men should act their age. But surely no man relishes being called a coward before other men, or likes to turn his back on anyone who suggests he might have a yellow streak across it; and no man but the coward can ignore an insult without an inner battle as fierce as the one he tries to avoid.

When Aunt Susan began to clear away the table, I knew I must go. So I said my farewells to her, and to Mary, but despite all my good intentions, I could not meet Jo's eyes.

Then Jo came down the steps and stood beside me. "I'll go with you, David," he said. "I need a bit of exercise after that fine wedding feast."

I thought Aunt Susan might protest, but she only looked at Jo and sighed. "I'll be waiting," she said. Then, with a wifely firmness, "You mustn't let it come to blows. Promise me that, Jo."

I waited, holding my breath. But Jo smiled and said, "If I make no promises, Sue, I'll have none to break."

A heavy cruel burden seemed to drop from my shoulders, and it occurred to me to hope that I, when my turn came, would have as much backbone as Pa and Jo when it came to withstanding a woman as pretty and fetching as Aunt Susan.

We walked up the road, the wind at our backs, and the hot afternoon sun was a glaring ball above the pinewoods. The dark clouds chased it with a savage hunger, pushing and tumbling, thunder rolling in their depths, and the pines whipped back and forth like maddened things.

My thoughts were like the pines, pushed now in this direction and now in that; but Jo's stride was even and his face untroubled, as if he had a bottomless well of strength and patience to draw upon when he needed them most.

When we reached the yard, Pa stepped from the barn and saw us coming. He stood there, not moving; and the prickling along my spine was like a woodpecker's hammering on his favourite hardwood tree. Jo stopped a few feet from Pa and put his hands on his hips, and everything fell into place for me. I moved away

from them, showing myself partial to neither Jo nor Pa, and this time there was no sickness or dread inside me.

"Well, George," Jo said easily, "let's see how much a coward I am. I hoped you'd come to your senses before now, but it seems a man like you has to be knocked around a bit before he'll listen to reason."

Pa balanced on the balls of his feet, his eyes hot and bright. "Try it," he said scornfully. "Try it, Jo Page."

Then Jo said, his voice quieter than I had ever heard it, "You've mourned her long enough, George. An animal when it's hurt hides away and strikes out at anyone who comes too close, but a man must learn to tolerate the world again."

Pa stared at Jo, seeming to disbelieve his ears.

"It was pretty bad when Molly died," Jo went on relentlessly, "and you couldn't see what you'd done to deserve it. You loved your wife and kids, and always tried to do the right thing, and look what you got for all your trouble. So you figured you'd play it smart the next time. You'd push everybody away from you, and maybe then you'd care less and things wouldn't hurt as much." He added bluntly, "You've been hating me for a long time, thinking I was taking Susan away from you and turning the kids against you. I haven't done anything of the kind, but it ought to prove something to you. You haven't been so smart, after all. You're still afraid, and things still hurt."

"Shut up," Pa said between his teeth.

"And a man can be decent," Jo said softly, "and still be a man."

Pa moved so quickly that he caught Jo unawares; his head jerked back with Pa's first blow, and if he had been a smaller or a lesser man his neck would surely have cracked with the force of it.

But they were well matched, and Jo recovered his balance and ducked Pa's second blow, driving his fist into Pa's ribs. Pa swayed, then sidestepped one of Jo's fists and caught the second squarely on his jaw; he returned it with a blow driven with all the strength of his right arm, and was nearly staggered when Jo returned the same. They moved in a circle around the yard, slugging away, brushing away each blow as if it mattered not at all, and I would be less than human if I did not admit it was truly a sight to see.

The lightning flashed and the thunder rolled through the clouds like cannon shot, and the first big drops of rain came down. But Jo and Pa paid no attention; Jo staggered back against the barn once and Pa went backwards over the woodpile, knocking over a barrel of nails as he fell and swearing roundly

at his clumsiness. Jo's white shirt was ripped from collar to waist and Pa had lost an entire sleeve of his blue working shirt; both of them showed blood on their faces, mixed with the sweat drenching them.

The rain came down in a hard downpour, but the dull impact of hard fist against hard flesh continued until my own head felt numbed with it, and I began to wonder where it would end.

"Who's to win," I ventured, "if I'm the only one left on my feet? I could bring you both back to your senses, but you'd only have it to do over again."

I might have been speaking to the wind, but I knew I must try again.

"Pa, Jo," I said firmly, "call it a draw and let it be."

Neither man seemed likely to let it be. Then Jo landed a telling blow to Pa's ribs, sending him reeling against the well. The bucket came loose and fell into the depths, its chain rattling with a huge noise until it fetched up with a splash at the bottom. Pa shook his head to clear his eyes and rubbed his hand over his face.

"Say the word," Jo said heavily, "and I'll quit."

Pa lunged to his feet. "You'll be the one to cry quits!" he said, and my chest nearly burst with pride.

"A draw," I said hastily. "The one who'll first admit it's a draw is the best man between you."

They looked at each other, yellow head and black head lowered a trifle, faces battered, neither entirely steady on his feet.

Then Pa said, slowly and painfully, "I'm not saying you know what you're talking about. Words are cheap and saying a thing don't make it so."

"Think again," Jo said. "All of it's true, and you know it."

"Maybe," Pa said stubbornly, "and maybe not." He glared at Jo. "I don't like being made to look a fool."

"Then stop acting like one."

Pa's forehead was creased, as if he found it difficult to think clearly. And, to be sure, there was a great deal to think over; even I, who should not have been surprised, was somewhat shaken that Jo Page could look inside Pa's heart and understand the sorrow that had kept him driven and bitter. But if Pa seemed dumbfounded, I noticed that the strange bleakness had gone from his eyes.

Jo stepped towards Pa. "Who's a coward?" he demanded.

To my amazement, Pa grinned. "Lor', Jo, you've a wicked right arm."

Jo laughed, deep in his throat, and shook his head wearily. "I've had enough of yours," he said, "both right and left."

And as if both of them had been struck foolish, they stood there grinning at each other, rain wetting them to the skin and plastering their hair over their eyes. Then they turned, at the same instant, and came to the porch, both moving with extreme caution lest one should betray more unsteadiness than the other.

"We could use something to clear our heads," Pa said. "Break out the cider, David."

I sat between them on the steps while we drank Pa's best hard cider. The rain soon began to abate, having swept the air of all heat and turmoil, and we sat in companionable silence and smelled the sweet wet earth and watched the clouds, shredded and empty, as they drifted over the trees.

When we heard the bells coming up the road to the house, it was too late to move. So we all sat quietly, eyes on our cider mugs, and waited for the second storm to break about our heads.

The bells ceased their ringing. Rain dripped from the chinaberries and a bloom fell from the cape jasmine bush, making such a noise that I almost jumped.

"Well," Aunt Susan said. "A shameful sight, indeed."

No one answered, for there was plainly nothing to say.

"Three grown men, and look at you." Aunt Susan's accusing blue eyes fell on me. "Why didn't you do something, David? You seem to be the only one left intact."

Pa lifted his head. "Leave David alone, Susan," he said. "He's carried a heavy load today." His hand came down firmly on my shoulder. "I like a man who knows when to step forward and when to step aside."

That was all he said. But that was the way it happened that Pa kept his promise, and my birthday still more than a week away.

"Where is Mary?" I asked suddenly.

"She ran away," Aunt Susan said. "I knew I must find her, else I wouldn't have come." A smile teased at her mouth. "And a good thing I did, seeing the shambles you three have made."

But I knew she didn't mean it, for there was nothing of a shambles in the way Pa and Jo looked, sitting there on the steps, nursing their bruises and lifting their cider mugs together.

I looked Pa straight in the eye. "I'm going to fetch Mary," I said, making no apology for it. "She's hidden herself away to cry."

Pa did not look away. "Be easy with her, son," he said slowly, as if seeking a way to break the habit of harshness. "She'll want comforting."

I turned and ran past the chinaberries and the barn and up through the blackberry thickets. Mary was huddled on the edge

of the branch, but the trees had protected her from the worst of the rain.

I sat down beside her, as quiet as I could be, and put my arm around her. "You mustn't cry," I said, and Mary raised a tear-wet face.

"I want to come home, David," she said miserably. "I love Jo and Aunt Susan, but I want to be with you and Pa."

"We must find a housekeeper first," I said, "for neither Pa nor I can cook a decent meal. But Pa will be pleased that you want to come home, Mary."

"I'll go and tell him now," Mary said. "I don't think he meant to hit me, David. Do you?"

"No," I said softly, "he didn't mean it."

Then we both laughed, and walked back down the hill. I still held her hand, knowing it was a lonely thing to be small and afraid, and by the time we rounded the barn she was skipping along beside me.

It was then I knew for the first time how good it was to be a man grown at last, able to choose my way of doing a thing and willing to back it up. It was so good that I wanted to sing at the top of my lungs, like Jo Page, until they could hear me clear over in the next county.

And so I did.

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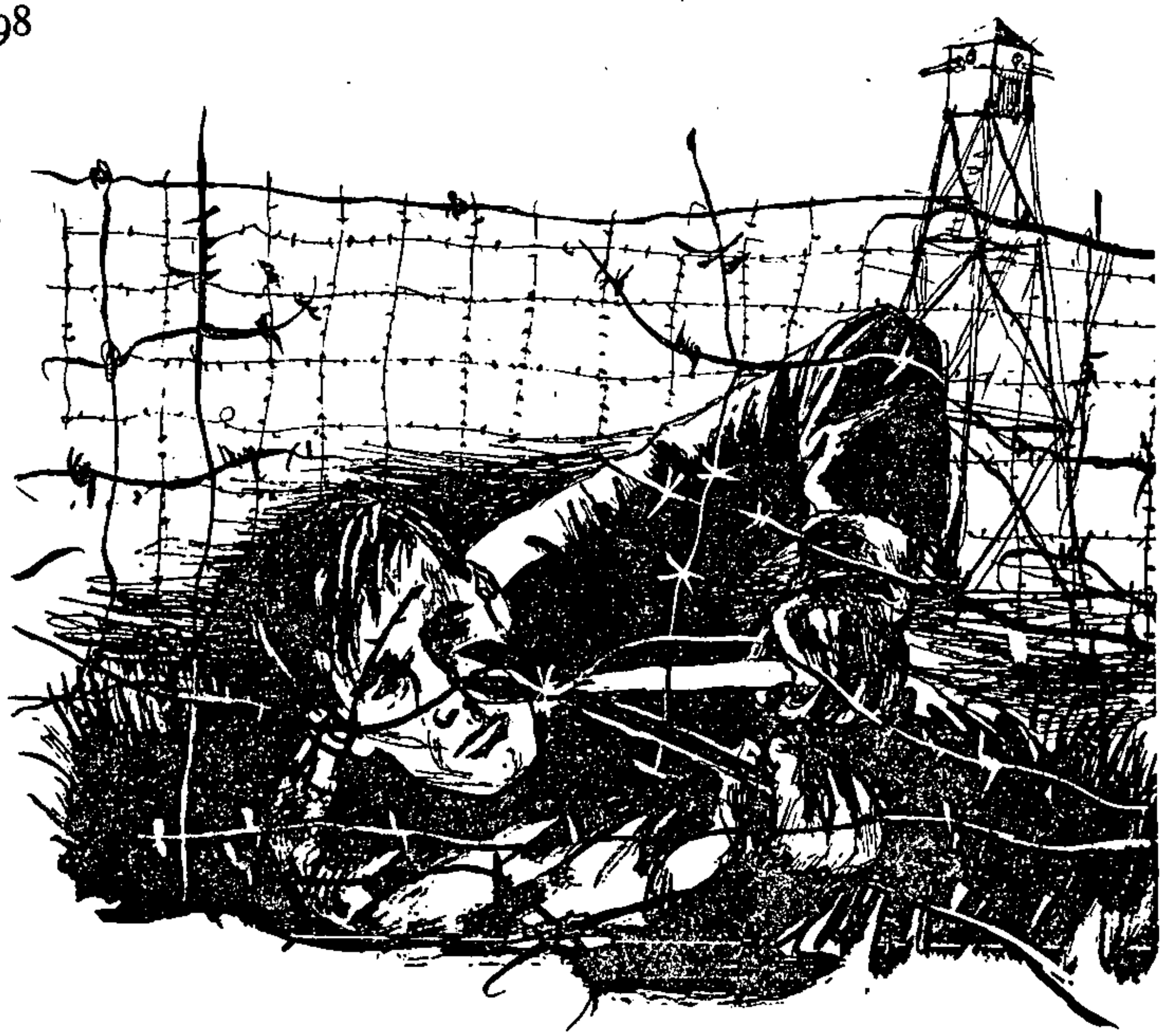
"Have you the abridged edition? I'm only in for ten days."



My Name is Anna

A true story told to

JERRARD TICKELL

MY NAME is Anna. I am a Hungarian university graduate, married, with one child. At the time of which I speak, we lived in Budapest. My son Stefan was then eight years old, which is to say he had known no life other than one of slavery and fear. Twelve months before, my beloved husband, also a university graduate, had contrived to leave Hungary on an "official mission" to the West. He had not returned. When he left, I knew that he had no intention of returning. With all my heart, I had encouraged him to go. At least one member of our little close-knit family would live in dignity and freedom.

My husband's defection, of course, brought the Secret Police hotfoot to my door. I claimed to be an ardent supporter of the régime and an indignant deserted wife who had known nothing of her errant husband's plans. After numerous interrogations, this plea was accepted and my name transferred from the " highly suspect " list to some lower category of potential criminal.

A year of loneliness passed. . .

Sunday, 7th June had been a sultry day.

At about half past six in the evening of that day, a strange man turned up in the courtyard of my house in Budapest and asked courteously if he might have a word with me in private. My mother, my sister-in-law, her two children, and my own son were with me at the time.

I took the stranger indoors to the dining-room. The unexpected visit of any unknown person to a Budapest house is apt to cause a fluttering of the heart, and my curiosity was mixed with anxiety. I pretend to a certain elegance myself and I therefore observe it in others. His clothes had once been very good but now were threadbare. His shoes were well-worn and battered but they had once been handsewn by a craftsman.

The man himself was about thirty-five—at least eight years

older than I. He was tallish and lean, and his build, though slight, gave more than a hint of tensile strength. The bones of his face were fine and small; he had a straight nose and his brown, windbeaten skin was stretched taut across high cheekbones; he had blue, fisherman's eyes, set wide apart, unblinking, and curiously penetrating. He spoke the fluent Hungarian of an educated man who had read the poets and was sensitive to rhythm.

After a moment or two of conversational fencing, I asked him somewhat timorously in what way I could be of service to him. He appeared to consider my question gravely. Then he said, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, that he had come to see me on behalf of my husband and that he proposed taking me and my son across the frontier that very night.

I stared at him aghast.

"It is essential that we leave at once," he went on, smiling, "or your family will learn about the plan; and the fewer people who know the better. By the way, my name is Tibor—just Tibor—and here are my credentials."

He handed me documents which proved beyond any shadow of doubt that he was telling the truth. Among them was a letter from my husband, and also family photographs which he had taken with him when he defected.

Although for nearly a year I had been waiting and praying for this moment, my immediate reaction was that I could not possibly go. I had been supporting my mother ever since the death of my father. How could I possibly leave her and my younger brother to face the consequences of my departure?

In great agitation, I explained this to Tibor.

He argued with me for the best part of three hours, trying to persuade me that no trouble would follow for my mother and brother. Both would be looked after by his friends. His unique powers of persuasion, combined with his engaging manner, made him difficult to resist. I was utterly convinced that I could never even summon up sufficient strength to start, and I was further consumed with a deadly fear that at the frontier either my son or I—or both of us—would be killed.

I told the man quite categorically that an immediate start was out of the question. I had to go to my work the following morning.

I added that on the day after that—Tuesday—I had arranged to go on holiday with my son for five days. I then said that I would think the whole thing over and that he could be quite reassured that he had carried out his mission excellently. It was however useless for him to imagine that he, a stranger, could

take me away by " pulling me by the hair," when I myself was incapable of tearing myself away from my family.

He asked me absentmindedly, as if thinking about something else, " Where are you and your son going for your holiday? "

I told him.

He laughed with surprised delight.

" This is extraordinary! Had you not told me the name of this town, I would, in any case, have suggested your going there. This town is—" he whispered with a twinkle—" one of my staging posts. You will see."

His words frightened me. They were so sure, so confident. Then, to my greater horror, he informed me that according to the instructions he had received he was not allowed to leave the house that night unless we came with him. He said with a shrug that for him to stay out alone in the streets all night could be dangerous. We agreed that I should introduce him to my family as a friend of my elder brother whom he had met during the " siege " of Budapest, and who was compelled to spend the night with us as he had missed the last train home. I knew they wouldn't believe me.

I prepared a bed for him in the spare room which can only be entered from the side of the house. I then introduced him as casually as I could to my family who naturally were greatly alarmed, suspecting at once that he came from the Secret Police, the A.V.H. I, for my part, was quite convinced that he was genuine, but I could not possibly tell my family this.

I went to bed—but not to sleep. At every sound I jumped out of bed and went to the window. At about two a.m. a car stopped outside the house and two men got out. I could only see them dimly but I heard the pounding of their nailed boots on the pavement. I was certain that they were the A.V.H. Shaking from head to foot, I woke my brother and begged him to go to Tibor's room and warn him. He did so—and came back to tell me that Tibor was in no way perturbed and had calmly gone back to sleep. The Secret Police, he had said, could not possibly know he was there.

My brother, who was now as agitated as I was myself, insisted on an explanation. At last I whispered the whole truth that Tibor had come to take me and Stefan over the frontier to my husband, but that I had no intention of going. My brother was at the same time very much frightened—and relieved. We both knew the new law by which any person, family or friend, who learns of any other person's intention to leave the country and fails to report it to the authorities, is liable to several years' imprisonment. This law is designed to create fear by turning

every man, woman, and child in Hungary into a potential spy.

What I told my brother was quite true. I had no intention of going. All I wanted was that Tibor should leave the house and never return.

While we were still whispering, the car drove away. I went back to bed to lie awake until the dawn.

At half past five, I had a further frightened conversation with Tibor. Calmly and cheerfully, he told me that he had already procured papers for all three of us. He and I would travel as husband and wife, and Stefan as our son. He also showed me a forged official document entitling us to be in or near the frontier area. To get rid of him, I agreed, after long persuasion, to meet him outside the station at A, the town where my son and I had already planned to spend our holiday, on Tuesday afternoon at half past five. I asked for his promise in return that he would immediately go back to wherever he came from.

He smiled at me. I was aware, with a shiver, that he was a man of inflexible purpose. He said, " Au revoir," and walked with a confident stride into the grey street.

Later that morning, I left for my office in such a desperate state of mind that on several occasions I burst into uncontrollable tears. My office colleagues—three women and a man—are also my close, intimate, and trusted friends. They were in great distress at my all too obvious near-hysteria and beseeched to be allowed to help.

Towards midday, I confessed to them that I had suddenly been confronted with a fearful choice and that I no longer had the physical or mental strength to make a decision. We arranged to meet that evening after work and seek advice from the occult.

We sat in a darkened room, grouped in a half-circle around a medium. I told this medium that I most urgently sought counsel about a certain private problem. She went into a trance and, after several minutes of mentally-groping silence, announced in a low voice that she was in touch with my husband. His message to me was that he knew all about my indecision and that he urged me only to consider the need for our child to grow up in freedom.

My secret was out. The reaction of my friends was as immediate as it was courageous. They too knew the law and sharply realised that in supporting my husband's mysteriously transmitted plea they risked trial and conviction as enemies of the state. Yet they were unanimous. My duty was to face the danger and go.

I finally arrived home. My son was terribly excited about our holiday and kept asking me all sorts of questions. What time did the train leave? How long was the journey? I was too distraught to answer. I said that I didn't know, and that we'd see about all these things in the morning. Then I took a sleeping tablet—to no effect. All night long my mind swung like a pendulum and only at dawn did I sink into a sort of exhausted coma. . .

I woke up very late. I could not bear to disappoint Stefan, so I hurriedly threw some clothes into a suitcase. I told my mother that I was going to the station anyway but that I wasn't sure yet if I would go on to A or not, adding feebly that the weather looked too uncertain. I kissed my mother, grabbed Stefan by the hand, and fled into the street.

At the corner I stopped. I said to Stefan, " If I ask you a question, will you promise never to breathe a word to a living soul? "

" I promise."

" Which would you rather do, go on holiday or—" I drew a deep breath— " join your father? "

" More than anything in the world, I'd like to join Papa." His small face was alive with excitement.

This somehow made up my mind, though I was filled with foreboding and fear. At the station, I bought two single tickets to A, telling myself that we could always come back to Budapest by the next train, knowing in my heart that my child and I were committed to what seemed a suicidal adventure.

When Stefan and I left the station at A, we saw Tibor immediately. He walked cheerfully towards us. I asked Stefan to wait for a moment while I talked to him alone. A last, despairing solution had come to me. It was that Tibor should take only Stefan with him. The child *might* not be missed by the authorities, whereas I certainly would be and my family could suffer.

Tibor listened patiently, hearing me out. Then he spoke. His orders were to take both of us and he proposed to carry them out.

I asked him who had given him these orders.

" Those who love you and wish you well. They are—" he lifted one hand and let it fall— " a group of patriots. More I cannot say."

He was extremely firm and kind. In his presence the flutterings of my heart changed into a steady, confident beat, as he transferred his own quiet strength, humour, and self-assurance to me. Together we walked back to Stefan.

I said, smiling, " Stefan, this is Tibor who is going to take us to join your father."

Stefan gazed earnestly at Tibor's face. " Oh please, please, Tibor. I want so much to see him again."

For obvious reasons, I had only brought light holiday clothes which were unsuitable for the journey we contemplated. Tibor bought a windjacket, a pair of long trousers, and heavy woollen stockings for Stefan. He then took us to a certain house where we spent the night. Stefan and I slept well and dreamlessly, knowing that Tibor was on guard and that no harm would come to us.

Next morning, soon after ten o'clock, we travelled on by train to a station which I shall call B. During the journey, a member of the Secret Police walked along the corridor, peering into each compartment. He seemed satisfied with us and did not ask for our papers. We arrived at B at about two o'clock in the afternoon and immediately started walking into empty and deserted countryside.

After going some seven or eight miles, we arrived at the hamlet of C. On its fringe is an old farmhouse belonging to an elderly peasant couple. The old lady was much perturbed by our presence as she lives in deadly fear of " them." It is unwise even to say the dreaded initials A.V.H. out loud.

During the afternoon a forester hurried to the farmhouse to say that a shooting party was in the vicinity and might easily visit the farm. Tibor, Stefan, and I went up to hide in the loft. We heard the muffled sound of rifle shots and rejoiced that, for once, the sportsmen were not after human game.

At this point I would like to stress how much my son and I had come to rely on Tibor. I have never met a man of such absolute but unobtrusive courage. He treated my son like an elder brother or, rather, like an affectionate and understanding father. He told him stories that varied from " once-upon-a-time " to stark, utterly factual accounts of men who were prepared to die in the twin causes of human dignity and freedom. Stefan rarely left his side, plying him with questions about his lethal games of hide-and-seek, and was excited beyond measure when Tibor allowed him actually to touch and to hold his oiled and ready weapons.

Before dusk, we dressed for the last stage of our journey. Stefan put on the warm clothes that Tibor had bought for him in A. I wore a pair of thick brown trousers and Tibor's stout linen overshoes. The old lady had prepared eggs, cheese, bread, and apples. The apples were to be a substitute for water, which is difficult to carry. Tibor had thought of everything.

Now it was six o'clock. The old man had harnessed an elderly bay horse to a farm cart and in this we drove, jolting along rutted country roads, scattering the geese, raising plumes of dust. I don't know how long we drove. I do know that my fingers were woven with my son's fingers, and that I gazed at the approach of sunset with wonder, melancholy, and a steady resignation.

At some distance outside a village, we stopped. It was more than twilight and we set off on foot into the gloom. A full moon was rising and would soon flood the countryside. Tibor led the way. He walked as I imagine a Red Indian would walk, sure-footed and with practised caution. My instinct was to crawl, but Stefan, to whom Tibor had subtly communicated his own fearlessness, urged me to keep up. I was very proud of my son.

It was full darkness when we stopped to rest in a field of maize. Stefan was swaying on his feet and, because the ground was sodden, he lay across Tibor's body and mine, and was suddenly asleep with the profound sleep of the exhausted young. I could just make out his features in the darkness—the long curling lashes spread like tiny fans on his cheeks, and his tousled hair falling on his forehead. I sighed, wondering again whether I had the right to endanger his life like this.

As I did so, Tibor put a hand on my shoulder. I looked down at it in that strange daze that seems to possess one at certain moments of stress, noticing the long artistic fingers combined with the broad palm and muscular thumb of a practical man. He shook me gently.

" No, Anna, don't waver now. I promise no harm shall come to you or to your son." I felt his strength flow into me.

For an hour we talked in whispers. He had been born, he said, to carry out these missions. Without them, his life would be without purpose. He loved Hungary with the all-consuming love which a man normally gives to a woman, and hated with an equal passion the stranglehold which held her people fast. I asked a question. He said quietly that if anyone tried to hinder us on our journey, that person would die. I prayed out loud that such a thing would not happen and Tibor said, " Amen," with great solemnity. Then he explained exactly what to do in case of an emergency, and I agreed to act as he told me to do. Imperceptibly, I had slid into and become part of a world in which violence was matched with violence.

Stefan woke in about an hour and was instantly agog to continue our journey. We walked on, skirting fields and maize plantations, until about three a.m. By this time we were so tired that Stefan and I could hardly move one muddied shoe in front of

the other. The frontier was little over a mile away and, had Tibor not had a woman and child with him, he would have gone over that night. As it was, we crept as silently as fieldmice into the saturated maize. Tibor cut a sheaf and we spread it on the puddled ground for Stefan to lie on, covering him with everything we could spare. Then he and I lay down on either side of him. I was asleep before I had finished my prayers.

When the sun rose I was almost happy in the knowledge that we were going to spend the whole day here in relative safety. We shared out the meagre supplies we had brought with us, chewing the apples bit by bit. In the distance, we could hear the voices of people working in the fields, the occasional clip-clop of hoofs on the road, and the jolting of farm carts. As noon turned into afternoon and afternoon into evening, my fear of the night's ordeal returned to me. Tibor sensed my mounting anxiety. He put his strong and steady hand over mine and said in his quiet voice that nothing could happen to us because God was with us.

At about eight p.m. we started on the last lap. From now onwards we crept along on hands and knees for the greater part of the way as we were nearing the main road which runs along the frontier. We crossed a large maize field until this main road lay about three hundred yards ahead of us. Here we lay flat on the ground, waiting for the passing of the guards. With the moon shining brightly, the crossing was obviously going to be extremely hazardous.

Two guards walked past on the main road, talking to one another. They then separated. I was terrified that they might have a dog with them, but Tibor reassured me, saying that "they" had already killed almost all "their" dogs. I cannot remember whether the guards had passed down the road two or three times before Tibor said, "Now!"

We wriggled forward—and across the main road in moonlight that seemed to me to be as bright as day. Once on the other side, we crawled on, keeping in the blue-black shadow of a maize field for about two hundred yards. With our bodies pressed to the ground, we looked back to see the guards approach each other, meet, exchange a casual word, and continue their endless patrol.

I have no idea how much farther we went on our hands and knees before Tibor pointed out the cruel outline of a barbed-wire fence in the dark distance. He warned us to be absolutely motionless as armed guards on horseback would pass by at any moment. Within a minute or so, they did ride by, two sinister figures in the moonlight. When they had gone we half ran, crouching, across a field of beet with sunflowers along its

edge. We saw the mounted police behind us. Ahead lay mortal danger.

There was a bare stretch of ground in front of the barbed wire. This had to be crossed. Deliberately I dug my fingernails into the ground, filling them with the earth of my beloved country. If I were to die, I wanted this Hungarian soil to be in my nails as a part of my body. If I were to live, I wanted to bear it with me to freedom.

Suddenly Tibor said tersely, "Follow me."

He started to run. Breathless and stumbling, Stefan and I followed. Swiftly and expertly, Tibor cut the wire of the first fence. We crawled through the gap—to see him already severing the wire that was connected up to the minefield between the two fences. My heart and Stefan's heart were beating with a pulse that seemed far too loud for safety. It is always at moments of crisis that the trivial or the irrelevant takes possession, and I found myself humming over and over again the long forgotten words of a song, "Boom—why does my heart go boom?" But Tibor's gloved fingers were snipping at the third line of barbed wire, the last barrier between us and everything that we longed for.

The wire parted and the ends trailed. Stefan wriggled through first. I followed, and Tibor came last. We almost fell into a kind of ditch on the other side where we lay breathing deeply for several minutes. Then Tibor said in a low voice, "We've got to get on. It's not safe here."

"But surely this is Austria and—"

"Do as I tell you," he said sharply.

We climbed out of the ditch and started to run. I heard a shout, followed by a burst of automatic rifle fire. Dodging, twisting, and turning we ran on while the bullets droned past us like furious bees. At the fringe of a forest, we flung ourselves down. The rifle fire stopped. There was a vast silence, interrupted only by the yelping and snarling of a dog. Soon that stopped too.

Tibor, my son, and I walked on. I had no sense of elation, but only one of sadness.

Little more remains to be told. What does remain is very important to me.

We reached a small hotel where we were immediately made welcome. After drinking cup after cup of what seemed to me to be the most fragrant and delicious coffee in the world, Stefan and I went to bed. It was already evening when we woke. We went down into a pine-scented room. There was no sign of Tibor. I

asked anxiously where the gentleman was who had brought us.

The fresh-faced waitress smiled. "Ah yes, the gentleman. He rested until lunchtime. He asked me to tell you that he has gone home because his work there is unfinished. He also asked me to give these to you and to your brave son."

The waitress handed me two tiny medals of Saint Christopher on exquisite silver chains. "And, madam, he asked me also to say that a telephone call will be coming through tonight for you from your husband. Friends will arrange for you to fly to Switzerland to rejoin him within a day or so." She turned as a bell rang in the office.

"That may be the call now."

I sank down into a chair—it was all too much to believe. I thought stupidly that I had not even thanked Tibor. Thank him—how can one thank a man for giving life and liberty to oneself and one's child?

I only know that I walked out of Hungary with a man whom God holds especially dear.

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ON DIET

"You see, Sir Harry," Roger Swizzle would say, "it's all done by eating. More people dig their graves with their teeth than we imagine. Not that I would deny you the good things of this world, but I would recommend a few at a time, and no mixing. No side dishes. No liqueurs—only two or three wines. Whatever your stomach fancies, give it.

"Begin now, tomorrow, with the waters. A pint before breakfast—half an hour after, tea, fried ham, and eggs, brown bread, and a walk. Luncheon—another pint—a roast pigeon and fried potatoes, then a ride.

"Dinner at six, not later, mind; gravy soup, a glass of sherry, nice fresh turbot and lobster sauce—wouldn't recommend salmon—another glass of sherry—then a good cut out of the middle of a well-browned saddle of mutton, wash it over with a few glasses of iced champagne; and if you like a little light pastry to wind up with, well and good. A pint of old port and a devilled biscuit can hurt no man. Mind, no salads, or cucumbers, or celery, at dinner, or fruit after. Turtle soup is very wholesome, so is venison. Don't let the punch be too acid though. Drink the water, live on a regimen, and you'll be well in no time."

With these and suchlike comfortable assurances, he pocketed his guineas and bowed his patients out by the dozen.

ROBERT SMITH SURTEES, *Handley Cross*, 1843

It all depends on Scruffy . . . the wickedest, ugliest, most abominable and endearing of apes on the Rock. On the Prime Minister's own instruction in 1944 the depleted Gibraltar apes must be kept up to strength. If the apes die out the British will lose the Rock! Lovejoy, right-hand man of Major Bailey, officer in charge of apes, is assigned a very special mission.

Scruffy

By PAUL GALLICO

"LOVEJOY," Timothy Bailey said, "you're to go to London."

"Yes, sir," the Gunner replied automatically, and then did what his opposite number in the American Army would have described as a triple take plus one. He stared at Tim simply popeyed. His mouth flew wide open. He shut it and opened it again quickly and came close to losing his balance. "What? What did you say, sir?"

"I said you were to go to London," Major Bailey repeated. "Special orders. You're to be flown out tomorrow morning at six, they've even detached a Wellington for you."

Gunner Lovejoy was breathless with delight. At the moment far off London seemed like the Persian poet's dream of paradise.

For he was remembering, of course, the London of his youth, left behind some twenty-five years ago: Wanstead, with its rows of old, ugly, comfortable houses one exactly like the other, its corner pubs fragrant with spilt bitters and the reek of pipe and cigarettes and the delectable girls who dressed themselves up and went out a-walking on Saturday nights.

London, London, London! Tubes and buses, and flicks that weren't three years old, busy shops and proper tobacconists', Piccadilly, Trafalgar Square . . .

Poor Lovejoy! Had he only known it, the London to which he was bound was only a delusion of his own fantasy. The wartime city was under siege, lights were out, beer diluted, food—what there was of it—practically inedible, and all the pretty Saturday-

Gibraltar Disclaimer

Old Gibraltar hands will, no doubt, amuse themselves trying to identify the characters in this book and associate them with persons they have known. This pastime I must hasten to inform them and all others so disposed will be a waste of energy since never during the war was I within a thousand miles of Gibraltar.

It was therefore quite impossible for me to base any of these characters upon any persons dwelling, serving, or in office there at the time. If there is any resemblance to any such person it is entirely accidental and unintentional, as all characters, situations, and events in this story are fictitious.

There is only one demonstrable fact in this otherwise total work of fiction and that is that on the 25th August, 1944, the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, caused a signal to be sent expressing his anxiety over disquieting rumours concerning the welfare of the Barbary apes in Gibraltar and the wish that they should not be allowed to die out. And on the 8th September of the same year a second directive to the effect that every effort should be made to restore the establishment of the apes to the number of twenty-four, and that this should be maintained thereafter.

So much for the truth. All that follows is nothing but the wildest imagination.

P. W. Gallico

night girls hustled away into the land army or the forces . . .

Still, the name London rang in the Gunner's ears like a trumpet call. He asked, " What's the gen, sir? "

Tim said, " Major Clyde has come across an ape, a female. You are to fly back there, collect it, and bring it out here to Gibraltar. I won't even impress upon you the importance of the mission or what it means if it fails."

For the first time the Gunner, with his marvellous instinct for trouble a-cooking somewhere, felt some of the shine rubbed off from his beautiful fantasy. " But why me, sir? " he asked. " Why not you? After all, the responsibility—"

Tim sailed the half sheet of the message, which his wife Felicity herself had decoded less than an hour ago, across his desk to the Gunner, saying, " You see what it says across the top."

Lovejoy did indeed, for it was stamped " Top Secret " and read:

SUITABLE FEMALE APE SIX YEARS OLD VIRGIN GUARANTEED MACAQUE SYLVANUS AFRICANUS IN PRIVATE HANDS PET OWNER PROVING TROUBLESOME EXPERT APE HANDLER OF CHARM AND PERSUASIVENESS WANTED CANNOT SPARE YOU FROM ROCK SUGGEST SEND LOVEJOY BUT CLEAN HIM UP STOP ALSO PHOTOGRAPHS WANTED REMEMBER ANNE OF CLEVES IF NO LOCAL HOLBEIN AVAILABLE SUGGEST GOOD RETOUCHING JOB OR BETTER STILL SUBSTITUTE PICTURE OF MORE AMIABLE SPECIMEN EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON MAKING GOOD IMPRESSION PM'S PRIVATE WELLINGTON ON AIRSTRIP 6 A M TOMORROW

Lovejoy read it through twice, pushing back his cap and scratching his head. Alarm bells were going off again. He didn't like obscurantism, obfuscation, mystery, or hanky-panky; he liked everything straightforward. Who was this owner who was proving difficult, and why? What was the meaning of the nasty crack in the signal about cleaning him up?

" I don't like it, sir," he said.

" Don't like what? "

" About cleaning me up, sir. What—? "

" Oh," said Tim. " That's just Major Clyde's way of putting the situation without using a lot of words. You know we're pretty relaxed here on the Rock in the matter of dress. Probably a lot of spit and polish around H.Q. in London. Get your hair cut, and I've arranged to have a new uniform issued to you, which I'll thank you to keep buttoned."

" And what's all that about charm and persuasiveness, sir? "

Undoubtedly, Tim thought, Major Clyde had his reasons for being mysterious, but he wished he had been a little more explicit if he expected him to cope. He said, " I shouldn't let that worry you, Lovejoy. I've known you to charm a whole pack of apes down from the trees, and as for powers of persuasion, if there is a better man on the Rock for talking a supply man out of Government property—"

But the Gunner was still regarding the dispatch with an unresolved frown.

" I don't quite get the picture, sir."

" Oh, come on, man," Tim said, tapping the signal, " it's not all that difficult. Major Clyde has located an ape—a potential mate for ' Harold,' to give old Scruff his official name—but the owner is proving sticky. You go back there and win the confidence of the beast, which you will be able to do at the drop of a hat, the owner withdraws objections, and Bob's your uncle. And besides, it's a trip back home to London, isn't it? "

The Gunner brightened again. " That's right, sir," he said. " I'll do me best . . ."

Major " Slinker " Clyde didn't exactly cause the welkin to resound with whoops of joy when Gunner John Lovejoy was

ushered into his presence in the cubbyhole that served him as his office in the M.I.5 section near Whitehall.

"Oh, it's you," he said, looking at the Gunner with a most misanthropic expression.

"Is that the best that those middens back there on the Rock could do with you?"

Gunner Lovejoy felt deeply hurt. He was drawn up to attention, all his buttons were buttoned, the new uniform was uncomfortable, the collar was tight and not at all like the soft denims he was able to wear around the Rock, and furthermore London, wartime London —at least that portion of it which he had been able to sample before being hurried on to keep his rendezvous with the Major—had proved a bitter disappointment.

"What's the matter with me, sir?" he asked, and in an attempt to improve whatever it was that appeared to have found disfavour with the Major, stiffened still more into military rigidity.

"Everything," Major Clyde announced flatly. He had the feeling that in a moment Gunner Lovejoy might begin to revolve like a model at a dress show in an attempt to register his good points.

"Relax, man, relax. For God's sake, sit down."

Insulted beyond words, the Gunner, having taken a chair by the edge of the Major's desk as commanded, reached into his tunic and produced a large envelope containing photographs and a letter which read as follows:

Dear Slinker,

Don't know what you're up to, but herewith the new Lovejoy. There wasn't time for plastic surgery but we have tidied him up as best we could. There is no better hand with an ape living and I know he'll fill the job . . . I enclose herewith several photographs purporting to be old Scruff. If these don't entice your virgin, I give up.

Good luck.

Yours, Tim.

The Major regarded the photographs which he extracted from the envelope and jumped as though he had sat upon a scorpion. "Holy Methuselah on a bicycle," he exclaimed.

There was no doubt but that the photographs of Scruffy, né Harold, which had brought forth this outburst were masterpieces. By some magic of the etcher's tool the retouching artist had changed the usual expression of suspicion, meanness, and general malevolence to be found in the piggy hazel eyes of the Barbary ape into one of love for, and faith in, all humanity.

The Major's spirits rose somewhat as he fingered these two speaking unlikenesses, one profile and one full face, and he said, "Damned good job. Full marks to Bailey." Then, "Look here, Lovejoy, no offence intended. I may have been a little harsh, but then you don't know what we're up against. As Major Bailey says, you're first class with the apes."

While speaking, the Major had been opening the bottom drawer

of his desk and produced a bottle of Scotch and two tumblers. He poured a generous portion into each and pushed one over to the Gunner, whose figure relaxed and eyes sparkled as he was at once shriven of all hurt and resentment by this generous gesture. He leaned forward and his fingers curled firmly round the base of the glass.

" Yes, yes," said the Major. " Drink up and enjoy it, for it's the last drop you're going to have until this mission is completed." His countenance suddenly assumed the darkest hues of villainy. " If I hear of you so much as smelling the cork of a bottle or even walking past a pub on the same side of the street, you're for the Tower."

Clyde rose, locked the door of his office, and pulled down the window blinds. " There are spies everywhere," he said, which sounded to Lovejoy like a joke, he having tabbed the Major as one of those odd officer types inclined to exaggeration and jape. The trouble was, there was a good deal of truth in it.

He went to a wall safe, opened it and, removing a file stamped " Top Top Secret," returned with it to his desk. He regarded the first pages moodily for a moment, leafing through the material, and then began.

" The owner of this ape is a Miss Constance Boddy, spinster, of 12 Wilton Gardens, Streatham, though at present she is residing at Cooks Hotel, Hope Cove, South Devonshire. She was born in Tilbury where her mother kept a kind of seafarers' boarding-house. Her father was a sea captain, about whom more later, and her mother it seems died when Miss Boddy was very young. Since her father was always on voyages of long duration, she was brought up by an aunt and uncle who had a greengrocer's shop in Streatham. This aunt and uncle raised their niece inculcated with all the virtues and stern morality of the British, and when Miss Boddy had reached the age of twenty-five, they abruptly departed this world within a few weeks of one another. They left her not only the greengrocer's business but, since she was the only relation and they were childless, the tidy fortune they had amassed during their lifetime."

Major Clyde looked up for a moment from the file which had been feeding him this information and said, " And so you see, that made her completely independent."

Lovejoy said, " And very nice for her too."

" The young Miss Constance Boddy," the Major went on, " was no fool with her money. She sold the greengrocer's business, invested the money wisely, and settled down in the small house in Streatham to make a home for her father, Captain Boddy, during the periods he spent ashore, which were few and far between.

" Although Miss Boddy was fond of her aunt and uncle who, incidentally, were pacifists, a philosophy with which she herself is strongly imbued, it was her absent father who she really worshipped, and as frequently happens in these intense father and daughter

relationships, when she was left alone and well off, having reached maturity, she devoted her life to him and never married. There was just one weakness afflicting Captain Boddy during these periods spent ashore in the loving care of his daughter, and which he was unable to conceal from her. Can you guess what this was, Lovejoy?"

"Women," Lovejoy suggested.

"Drink," corrected Major Clyde. "It was, I suspect, this addiction which kept Captain Boddy from rising in his profession."

The Major leafed through the notes looking for something in another section, and when he found it, said, "As reported by neighbours, the Captain would often come rolling home, roaring drunk, to be taken in and put to bed like a child by his daughter. Outwardly Constance Boddy ignored this failing as though it did not exist. Inwardly she formed an abiding hatred for intoxicating liquors and their effects upon human beings."

"Shocking, sir, ain't they?" commented Lovejoy.

Major Clyde looked at him sharply for an instant but there was only innocence on the Gunner's countenance, and the Major saw that he meant it. "Well," he said, "there you have a picture of Miss Boddy's life over a period of more than fifteen years: an active delver in the fields of temperance, peace, anti-vivisection, prevention of cruelty to animals, and other good works during her father's absence, and total dedication to his person and comfort when he came ashore."

The Major again leafed through another portion of the notes and then continued, "On one of his trips he brought his daughter as a gift a small female motherless Macaque acquired during a stop in Morocco. A strong bond was immediately welded between the woman who had been a motherless girl and the motherless ape, who was named Amelia.

"This bond," continued the Major, upon whom the whisky had the effect of drastically augmenting the imagery of his speech, "was forged later into a link of unbreakable steel when the Captain regrettably passed on during a voyage through the Straits of Malacca and was buried at sea, leaving Miss Boddy alone in the world except for Amelia. Does the strength of this attachment begin to dawn upon you, Gunner?"

"Gord, yes," replied Lovejoy, "mother and daughter bound together inseparably by the slings and arrows of adversity."

The Major looked up at the Gunner sharply to see whether his leg was being pulled, but there was no guile in the soldier's countenance and Clyde felt a momentary flash of encouragement. If there was that much poetry in the Gunner's soul his mission might stand a chance of success. "That's it," he said. "Got it in one. Amelia was the only living reminder of the man to whom she had devoted the whole of her adult life. Do you twig some facets of the problem, Gunner?"

"Narsty it could be, sir, couldn't it?"

"Just you wait;" the Major concluded, "for see here: her house

is her own, her investments have prospered so that she is provided for and very well for the rest of her life—" the Major paused here and then, some of the waspishness returning to his voice, he said—" so there is no question of bribery. Absolutely impossible! She's a simple soul who wants nothing. She's naturally shy of men and has high moral principles."

" Gord! " said Lovejoy.

" We were hoping," the Major suggested, speaking softly now, " that through your work with the apes you might manage to make some impression on her."

" How old is she? " asked Lovejoy.

" Forty-three," replied the Major.

The Gunner looked glum.

" And teetotal," added the Major sternly. " Got it, Lovejoy? A dedicated enemy of the demon rum; a woman addicted to good works."

" Gord! " said the Gunner again.

" Yes, I know," said the Major, " a bloodless, killjoy spinster, you'll say, going about poking her nose into other people's business. It all adds up to a rather repulsive picture, doesn't it? But the point is, Miss Boddy isn't like that at all. Here she is." And the Major uncovered the photograph.

The Major was pleased with his effect. The Gunner was indeed surprised, for in his mind he had been forming a picture of a bony, acidulous woman, hook-nosed, dried-out, and resentful of having become a feminine derelict. At forty-three Miss Constance Boddy was buxom and well-padded, her body apparently still harbouring the juices of life. She had soft hair, light in colour, which she wore cut short and which curled naturally and attractively. The eyes that looked up at Gunner Lovejoy from the picture seemed to be most kind and the whole expression of the face was one of friendliness and gentleness.

" Yes, yes," said the Major, reading the thoughts mirrored on the Gunner's open countenance, " surprising, isn't it? But there is still another facet of the character of this rather remarkable woman which makes our problem just that much more difficult."

Here Major Clyde reached for the bottle and repeated the potion in his and the Gunner's glass. The Gunner looked at him diffidently and forbore to reach for it, remembering the Major's threats, but the latter nodded in a friendly enough fashion and said, " It's all right, Lovejoy, go ahead. Your enforced monasticism doesn't begin officially until you leave this room." He himself quaffed deeply and then set his glass down with a sigh.

" Every so often, Lovejoy," he began, " one encounters on this earth women possessed of a deep and abiding innocence. They can be of any age beginning with six months, or in any guise, and the thing to remember is that experience of life, buffets, difficulties, or disasters encountered have nothing whatsoever to do with it. They ride the storms; they emerge from the eye of the cyclone unhurt, the fundamental innocence with which they were born unaltered.

The point I have been trying to make is that such a one is Miss Constance Boddy. She has that kind of innocence."

"Hasn't she any weaknesses?" asked the Gunner.

"None that we have been able to ascertain. As you can well imagine, Miss Boddy is against war, cruelty, and killing. She believes that both sides are wrong. You can't be angry with her, for there is a certain childlike quality to her innocence. She has almost some of that enchanting feyness I would not hesitate to describe as loony if she weren't so eminently sensible in a great many other areas."

Lovejoy, who was becoming increasingly depressed by the Major's recital, took a powerful swallow of his medicine. He then asked, "Sir, have you—ah—presented the matter to the lady?"

The Major also took a large gulp, almost as though wishing perhaps to drown the memories of the encounter. "In a round-about way," he replied. "She was quite horrified that we should even be thinking of such a thing. Wars were the concern of those who started them and she certainly was not going to involve either Amelia or herself in any manner. She must be persuaded to change her mind. We need Amelia." He flipped a page in the file, picked up a photograph, and spun it across the desk to Lovejoy. "This is Amelia," he said.

Lovejoy glanced at the photograph, then did a second take, and an expression of horror came over his open countenance. "Crikey!" he said. He reached for the rest of his whisky and emptied the glass.

Major Clyde did the same with his and then poured two more stiff ones.

"Oh, crikey," Lovejoy repeated, and studied the photograph of the most misbegotten Barbary ape ever to come to his notice. To begin with she was crosseyed. She was also deformed in some manner with one shoulder higher than the other. She was as repulsive a monkey as one could expect to nnd in a month of monkeys.

"Gord!" The Gunner gave vent to his favourite expletive again. "Scruffy won't like 'er."

"He has got to like her," the Major said fiercely. "That is provided we can ever get her hatched—what I mean to say is, if we can get her across that bridge—damn it all, man, you know what I am trying to say."

"Yes, yes," said the Gunner soothingly, "of course, sir, something to do about not counting your chickens before you come to them."

"That's it," said the Major. "Got it in one. You're a smart fellow, Lovejoy."

The Gunner took a drink on this statement, which tended to make him morose. Whenever officers flattered him, it usually was the beginning of an assignment leading to trouble.

"Now," the Major continued, "Hope Cove is a tiny fishing hamlet around the corner from Bolt Tail, consisting of a group of

thatched cottages, Cooks Hotel, a few boarding-houses for taking summer visitors, two rowing-boats, and half a dozen lobster pots. You will proceed thither tomorrow, leaving Paddington at 10.30 hours, and will register at the hotel where a room has been reserved for you and—"

"I don't like it, sir," Lovejoy interrupted suddenly with a definite shake of his head. "No, sir, I don't like anything about it. I'm not the man for the job. Cozening innocent women, that's not John C. Lovejoy, never 'as been, sir. I've 'ad me share of hard knocks and ups and downs, and women ain't played much of a part in them, and such as 'as has known what they've been about. There it is, sir, straightforward like out of the horse's mouth and no beating about the moss, if you'll excuse me, sir, for speaking so frankly."

The Major didn't reply immediately to this outburst, but sat there regarding the Gunner silently, his thin dark brows drawn into a straight line. Hunched up in his office chair with one knee drawn up, his eyes glittering, he looked like a dark fiend, a purposeful and malevolent Mephistopheles. And yet when he spoke again there was another surprise in store for Gunner Lovejoy. His voice was soft, caressing, and barely audible at first. "Lovejoy," he asked, "do you love your country?"

The Gunner was startled. That an Englishman, an officer and a gentleman, should put such a direct and wholly embarrassing question to him was quite beyond the scope of his experience.

"Wha—what's that, sir?" he stammered.

"I asked," reiterated the Major still softly but with slightly more emphasis, "whether you really loved your country."

Astonished and baffled, Lovejoy could do no more than reply, "Why yes, sir, I suppose so!"

"Oh, it's more than guess," said the Major, "it's something you know, something you feel, eh, Lovejoy?" He had lifted his gaze from his glass now and turned it full upon the Gunner, his eyes full of earnestness and quite darkly moist. "They teach us to respect the flag, Lovejoy, don't they? Stand up! Salute the colours! Bare the head! Eh? It's a symbol, that's all, a symbol. What it stands for is up to you!"

"If you say so, sir," said Lovejoy, still bewildered, but beginning to feel most queer.

"I do say so," replied Major Clyde. "We all carry self-preservation around in our nut, but in here is where England lives—" the location being just at the left of his wishbone. "The England that to me is a wooded hill in Westmorland, the small farm by a lakeside, and mountains in the twilight . . . children walking hand in hand to school; grey mists of rain blotting out the light like curtains closing; the distant whistle of a train and the glow of yellow light in the night from a far house on a hillside. That's my England."

The Gunner suddenly found himself strangely moved. What moved him was not the Major's England which was foreign to him

as Timbuctoo, but his own. Beer and the Saturday-night girls were back again . . .

" Bonny England," said the Major, who was well away under the influence of his half of the bottle, though no one would have guessed from either his or Lovejoy's outward appearance that they had had a drink. " Bonny England," the Major repeated, " but what are we going to do about it, Lovejoy? She's under fire! Back to the wall! Things aren't going too well. Question is, do we lie down and quit? Is she worth fighting for? "

" No, sir! Yes, sir! " It was both the alcohol and the inner person that was John C. Lovejoy which was responding to this extraordinary sentimental attack.

" That's the stuff," said the Major, and looked as though Lovejoy's reaction had put new life into him too. " That's the stuff," he repeated. " England needs that bloody ape and she's going to have her and blast the filthy Hun."

" Yes, sir," Lovejoy said again, and for the first time in his life was hearing trumpets call in his soul. " Blast the filthy Hun."

" And you're the one who can do it, Lovejoy," cried the Major, his voice no longer soft but full of steel and fire. " You are going down to Hope Cove to persuade Miss Constance Boddy to let us have her flipping chimpanzee—you'll take her back to Gibraltar and you'll boot old Scruff in the behind until he comes through like a man. If it turns out a boy, we'll name it John C. Lovejoy after the man who saved the whole bloody Empire." He was on his feet now and so was the Gunner. " Right, Gunner? "

" Right, sir—if you say so! "

" I do say so—" and the Major touched his heart again. " Here is where you feel it."

Overflowing with emotion, Lovejoy could only say, " Sir! " and delivered himself of a prodigious salute.

" And remember, Lovejoy, if you take another drink until this job is done I'll have you flayed and your hide nailed to that door."

Somehow the Gunner found himself on the street below, looking up at the Union Jack which floated over the building. Depression began to set in.

Entering Cooks Hotel, Gunner Lovejoy presented himself at the desk and gave his name to an angular but pleasant-faced proprietress, who said at once in an agreeable and sympathetic fashion, " Oh yes, how do you do, Mr. Lovejoy; your reservation has been made. We have been expecting you. You have been wounded, haven't you? We do hope you will be fit again soon. The air is wonderful down here and it's very quiet. May I show you to your room? "

Silently the Gunner cursed the machinations of Major Clyde who obviously had pinned the false heroism of a nonexistent wound upon him which he would have to live up to. On the other hand, Lovejoy reflected, as he mounted the stairs to the first floor, perhaps the Major was not as crazy as he seemed.

Since Miss Boddy was anti-war it was perhaps best to present himself as a victim of the holocaust.

He hoped to have a glimpse of Miss Boddy at dinner, but in this he was disappointed. There was only one other couple in this small dining-room.

The proprietress waited at table since servants were unobtainable, and brought him a chop in a covered dish, whispering, " It isn't chop night, but we must do something for our wounded men to make them well and strong, mustn't we? "

Gunner Lovejoy felt like a dog, but he also liked the look of the chop, and to cover his embarrassment he said, " Not many people here, are there? "

" Oh no," the woman said. " It's the war, of course. There's only Mr. and Mrs. Carwood over there; and then of course there's Miss Boddy, but she doesn't come down to dinner ever. She has it in her room. Because of the monkey, you know. Oh, but I suppose you don't know about that, she has a pet monkey. We don't mind it coming into the dining-room for lunch—it's really good as gold, but some of the guests might object in the evening, so she has her tray in her room. But I expect you will be meeting her at lunch. She always takes her monkey for a walk on the beach in the morning. If you want to lie in bed in the morning and rest, we can send you up a tray. I don't doubt but what we can manage an egg for you."

Not flippin' likely, the Gunner thought to himself. Not when she finds out what I'm after and the only wound I ever had was skinning my knuckle on a ruddy breech-block. Still, he was grateful for the intelligence. He now had a line on the enemy's movements. He too would be walking on the beach in the morning.

The Gunner slept well, enjoyed his egg, bathed and shaved and made himself presentable and went out on to the beach ostensibly examining it for seashells and other flotsam and jetsam until he saw the door of Cooks Hotel open and the buxom figure of Miss Constance Boddy appear. On her shoulder perched a large and mature female Macaque. The two of them came down the pathway across the motor road, and Gunner Lovejoy saw that the monkey wore a collar and was attached to Miss Boddy by a long thin chain which, however, gave them both leeway to walk.

If Miss Boddy was even more prepossessing in countenance than her photograph, roundfaced, dimpled, and sunny, with light blue and friendly eyes which had not registered in the picture, Amelia was uglier than her likeness conveyed. Her eyes were more severely crossed than he had thought possible.

Miss Boddy and her monkey now approached from one direction and the Gunner was rapidly closing the distance from the other. He found himself within a few yards of the two and in an absolute panic when the solution to his difficulties was supplied in miraculous fashion by none other than Amelia. As the Gunner was about to pass, the ape, who had been loping along at the end of her chain, halted, looked up, gave the most extraordinary screech of joy

denoting what could only have been love at sight and leapt for him.

Quite naturally, the Gunner halted and opened his arms wide to receive the ugliest of all magots who threw her arms about his neck in an ecstasy of adoration and kissed him full upon the lips.

"Hullo there, old girl," the Gunner said, when the loving greeting had somewhat subsided. "Ain't you the one."

There was no explanation for what Amelia had done—was doing, except that she had looked upon the Gunner and loved him. The result was that all of the preliminary obstacles the Gunner had feared were cleared away and he was provided with the best possible introduction to Miss Constance Boddy.

That lady approached the loving pair with a most beatific smile upon her round countenance. Amelia tightened the grip of her arms around his neck, and leaned her cheek against his.

"My good man," said Miss Boddy, "I don't know who you are, but you must have a very beautiful soul!"

Almost overcome, Lovejoy replied, "I don't know, I tries me best, ma'am."

"Oh yes, you have," Miss Boddy reiterated. "Otherwise Amelia would not love you!"

"Maybe they know," the Gunner said, "I've been around them kind of apes for the last twenty years." He fondled Amelia, who went into an ecstasy of chittering and cooing, and then as if to show her mistress that although someone new had come into her life she was not prepared to abandon everything for him, she leapt from Lovejoy's arms back to Miss Boddy's shoulder, gave her a peck and grinned at the Gunner.

"Why, how wonderful," exclaimed Miss Boddy. "You must tell me all about it some time." Then she took him in with her gaze, his features, his uniform, his presence, and said, "Oh of course, you must be the wounded soldier we have been expecting. Oh, you poor man! Is it very bad? How you must be suffering!"

In a flash Gunner Lovejoy saw how very clever Major Clyde had been to supply him with this automatic entrée into sympathetic feminine hearts. And in an equal flash he tumbled the Major's carefully built edifice to the ground. For he looked into the gentle eyes of Miss Boddy, now filled with genuine pity for him, and for the first time in any female encountered that innocence of which the Major had spoken to him at such length.

"It isn't true," he said. "I never have been wounded. It's all —it's a mistake. I'm as healthy as you are."

This confession elicited neither shock nor surprise from Miss Boddy who merely gave him a sunny and dimpled smile saying, "Oh, how glad I am for your sake. It must be dreadful to be wounded. It must be even more dreadful, I suppose, to have to kill someone. Have you ever killed anyone?"

Amelia leapt on to the sandy beach and came over to the Gunner, stood up on her hind legs, took his hand and tugged at it and looked up at him beseechingly. With a gesture that was almost automatic, the Gunner reached into his pockets for the odd bit

of sugar, carrot or peanuts, but found nothing. "Sorry, luv," he said, "the next time," and then he replied to Miss Boddy's question. "No, ma'am, I don't think so, leastways not that I know of. I have spent the last twenty years of me life on Gibraltar looking after a lot of bleedin'—I mean taking care of the apes . . ."

With a sinking feeling at the pit of his stomach, the Gunner realised that he had given himself away first crack out of the box.

"How very wonderful for you," she said, "to be able to live with them. Are they not the dearest creatures in the world? How you must miss them. What brings you to this part of the world?"

And then a most astonishing and even more horrifying thing happened to Gunner John Lovejoy, for while with one part of his cerebral system he realised that his error had gone unnoticed and he had been granted a reprieve which would enable him to answer with an adequate lie, the emotional hemisphere of his brain, hitherto a total stranger to him, rejected this subterfuge.

"I've been sent 'ere to bring your ape back to Gibraltar with me," the Gunner found himself blurting. "We've got to have a mate for old Scruff—'Arold, that is. That's his Christian name. 'E's the last ape left on the Rock, and the 'Uns caught on to it and 'as bought up all the apes around Africa, and the P.M. sent a message we've got to start breeding the hapes on the Rock again or we'll be druved off like it says in the history books, and there goes your flippin' war—at least, that's what Major Clyde says.

"There," concluded the Gunner, "now you know."

The Gunner then stood like a small boy feeling aghast at what he had done, knowing that his idiot declaration had knocked the props out from under the carefully built structure of his superior officers and, in all probability, hastened the collapse of the British Empire.

The anguish in his soul communicated itself to Amelia who climbed gently up his leg, then up his waist, thence to his shoulder where she clung, putting her cheek against his and making small noises in her throat.

Miss Boddy rose from the rock on which she had been sitting, and contemplated the soldier and her pet, looking with her clear eyes, now troubled, upon the countenance of the Gunner close to the little animal she had loved so long. And suddenly she was powerfully reminded of her father. But this was not all. With this memory somehow the Gunner had evoked a kind of nostalgia.

She took a second look at the Gunner. His cap sat at a rakish angle, giving him rather a youthful aspect and not disagreeable. Nevertheless she was shocked and somewhat hurt at this continued invasion of her privacy when she had already told the young man who had come upon a similar mission that she would have nothing whatever to do with the scheme of surrendering her innocent and virginal pet to the embraces of an unknown monster, in order that a lot of ridiculous and wicked-minded humans should be able to go on fighting and killing one another.

Yet even though she found the revelation distasteful, she was able to experience commiseration with the one who had confessed.

She said with some severity, " Well, at least you are honest." And then more gently, " And a good person at heart, I am sure, for Amelia loves you. Come, Amelia, we must be going."

It was to the credit of the ape that, new love or no, she leapt to the shoulders of Miss Boddy who marched off with her.

The Gunner collapsed on to the rock vacated by the spinster and let his shamed head sink between his hands. He sat there, a shrunken little figure of a man who seemed to have sunk inside his uniform. The hair emerging from his military cap was salted with grey, and the hands that hid his unhappy countenance were knotted and veined. He silently cursed himself, Tim Bailey, Major Clyde, the Brigadier, and even somewhat more timidly the Prime Minister, but mostly and with the greatest fervour the Army, which could uproot a man and order him into situations and actions which he would otherwise never even contemplate. Lovejoy's shoulder heaved in a prodigious sigh.

" There, there," said a gentle voice which came from somewhere above him, " don't take on so. Of course I should not dream of letting you have Amelia for such a horrid purpose, but if you like, some time later, you can tell me about Harold and his friends."

It was indeed Miss Boddy who had returned. Grief-stricken at the misery of her newfound love, Amelia had tugged at her mistress until she too had turned round and observed the woebegone scene, and her kindly heart had sped her back.

The Gunner felt his heart give a strange and unaccustomed leap within its cage. Again it seemed he had suffered a reprieve at the hands of this extraordinary woman. Amelia clapped her hands with pleasure. She was sensitive to the fact that her mistress as well as her newfound friend was no longer unhappy.

The Gunner stood up. " Yes, ma'am," he said. " Thank you, ma'am. Tell you about 'Arold? That'd take time. 'E's the best, 'e is. None other like 'im . . ."

Miss Boddy was insatiable for Harold stories, and she came to look forward more and more to evenings on the verandah when their two cigarette ends glowed like fireflies and there was no sound but the waves, the soft contented chittering of Amelia, and the voice of the soldier embroidering the saga of Harold.

Her childlike eagerness and delight in his stories pleased Lovejoy, at the same time taxing his imagination to the utmost. In fact the Gunner found that he was plumbing depths in himself hitherto totally unsuspected, leaving him often staggered with surprise at his own inventiveness—even without the dew of strong waters.

Miss Boddy's cigarette end glowed in the darkness; she sighed with contentment. " What a dear, good, kind man you must be, Mr. Lovejoy, to love animals so. And to think you don't drink either, like so many of the rough soldiery."

The Gunner felt like a dog, having made a point of his teetotalism with Miss Boddy. However, he felt in one of his more distant bones, down around the ankles, that he might at some time or

other be needing a hedge and so he said, " Y-a-a-s, ma'am, but it ain't been all that easy. It's not that I haven't had me battle with strong drink before I saw the light, or that there ain't days when the tempteyshun comes over me to backslide, a tempteyshun which up to now I have resisted."

In the darkness of the blacked-out village Miss Boddy's voice vibrated with emotion. " Oh, Mr. Lovejoy," she quavered, " how very brave of you. If ever the feeling should come over you when I was with you—if you told me about it, I should be proud to help you."

Something tickled the back of Gunner Lovejoy's mind, a scrap of his conversation with Major Clyde, something to do with the fact that Miss Boddy so far had evinced no weakness and the Army was expecting him to discover one, and make use of it.

Was this then one, this passion for prohibition, and could it be put to account? The Gunner filed this away in his mind for future reference and continued enlarging the epic of Harold, in the hopes that Miss Boddy eventually could be led to consent to the idea of giving Amelia in marriage to this paragon.

What made his task even attractive now and left his conscience free was that, like so many writers, he was falling a victim to his own creation and was beginning to believe wholeheartedly in its reality.

Thus Harold-Scruffy became a kind of split or dual personality. Scruffy was bad, but Harold was good. Scruffy was Scruffy and no remedy for that, but Harold became endowed with a life and character of his own, speeding towards canonisation.

Nor was the legend thus created in any way diminished by the cunning photographs of Harold with which Lovejoy had been supplied, one of which now resided on the dressing-table in Miss Boddy's room, so that in privacy she could continue to contemplate the hero to whose saga she was listening nightly.

Aside from compulsory teetotalism, Gunner Lovejoy found himself enjoying his holiday in Devon. The hotel spoilt him with extra eggs and titbits and other things off ration for his meals, and finally the pleasant personality of the plump spinster coupled with the love of Amelia combined to make the time pass delightfully.

This idyll was shattered by a telephone call which turned out to have Major Clyde sharply at the other end of the line.

" What the devil is going on down there, Lovejoy, and why haven't you reported? The Governor is giving me hell, the Colonial Secretary is cluttering up the cables, the Brigadier is getting hot under the collar, Major Bailey is close to a nervous breakdown, and the P.M. has asked what's been done about his directive to bring and keep the Rock apes up to strength. What are you trying to do, send us all down the drain? "

" No, sir," said the Gunner, genuinely startled to find that there was another world outside Hope Cove, South Devon, and an irritable and angry one which apparently was still at war. " I was just thinking of writing you a letter, sir."

" Charming of you, Lovejoy," came the acid voice of the Major.

" Send it on by pigeon post, eh, or maybe by dog sled via the Great Circle? What's happening, man, what's happening? That's what I want to know. Have you got anywhere? "

" Y-yes, sir, at least I think so. She loves me! "

There was a moment of silence from the other end of the line, after which the voice of Major Clyde filled it again so freezingly that icicles must have formed on the wires between London and Devonshire. " May I be the first to congratulate you, Gunner; and at the same time might I also remind you that this is an Army at war and not a matrimonial bureau. In this instance your private life—"

" Oh for Gord's sake, sir," the Gunner rushed to explain as the penny clanked, " not 'er—Amelia, sir."

Major Clyde said, " Well, what's going to come of it, or do you want me to ask for an armistice until you can make up your mind? "

" No, sir," said the unhappy Gunner. " I've been getting the old girl warmed up. I was going to ask 'er pretty soon to let me take Amelia—"

" When? " asked the Major.

" S-Saturday night," replied the Gunner, with a sinking feeling at the pit of his stomach as he realised that he had irrevocably committed himself, it being Friday morning.

" O.K.," said the Major. " Ring me as soon as she gives her answer," and hung up.

Quite suddenly, out of the blue, almost as though she had guessed that this idyll was drawing to a close, Miss Boddy relieved him by giving him the opening for which he was desperately seeking. She said, " It has been so pleasant having you here, Mr. Lovejoy, with your wonderful stories about Harold. I feel as though I know him almost as well as I do Amelia. I suppose you will have to be getting back to him soon; he must miss you dreadfully."

" Yes, ma'am, that's it! " the Gunner said, rushing the words forth lest the opportunity pass. " I 'ad a letter from 'im only the other day—I mean from the chap who's looking after 'im. Lonely, 'e is. And pining, that's wot. A mate is what 'e needs, a mate and a family like everyone else. Look 'ere, Miss Boddy, what about letting me take Amelia back to old Harold? They're made for each other, that's wot they are. Think how 'appy they'd be up there on the old Rock together by Prince Ferdinand's Battery. All the peanuts they could eat and a lot of little hapelets running around. You could trust her with me. I've had the care of hapes for twenty years. I'd see her all right, ma'am. Why the number of little hapes I've helped to deliver—"

Miss Boddy stirred uneasily in the darkness, and the interruption had the effect of stemming the Gunner's flow. Then she said softly, " Oh no, Mr. Lovejoy, I'm afraid I would not want Amelia ever to do anything like that."

" But, ma'am," said the Gunner impassionedly, " it's nature,

ain't it? Amelia here has got a heart brimming over with love, look at 'er—" indeed Amelia was nibbling dreamily at the Gunner's ear—" every creature has got to 'ave a mate, like! "

" We don't," said Miss Boddy, speaking even more softly. " Not Amelia and I."

" But, ma'am," said Lovejoy, beginning to flounder as he realised he had put his foot in it, " this is different, don't you understand, it's on account of the war."

" But surely you will remember," replied Miss Boddy, " that I don't approve of the war."

" But Harold all by himself on the Rock pining for Amelia."

" How does he know about her, Mr. Lovejoy? "

" I wrote," said the Gunner.

Miss Boddy was very gentle but very firm. " It's no use, Mr. Lovejoy," she said. " I should never permit Amelia to leave my side to go so far away even with someone as—as kind-hearted and trustworthy as you. I told this to the young man who came here; I'm very sorry to have to tell you the same. The answer is no."

And from that position there was no budging her.

" I think I'll go for a walk," the Gunner said, and rose.

" Poor Mr. Lovejoy," Miss Boddy said, " I know you are disappointed, I'm so sorry."

It was still early, before nine o'clock in fact, and the Gunner proceeded down the path that led along the cliff to the village. With purposeful step Gunner John C. Lovejoy entered the oak-beamed lounge of the Crown and Anchor.

When he emerged at closing-time the Gunner was loaded. He had not been tossed out, nor did he have to be helped across the threshold, his reaction to strong drink being mainly internal, and he had the ability to stand up to a bar for hours without any visible change in his appearance. In the Crown and Anchor, however, he experienced conditions to which he was unaccustomed.

Since the pub was blacked out and every crack that might show a light to sea was stuffed, the atmosphere within can be imagined. Without, the Devon nights were cool verging on the chill, so when Lovejoy passed from the steamy fug of the pub into the teeth of a wind that had decided to come visiting from Iceland, he suddenly found his metabolism affected with results damaging to his sense of equilibrium.

It was now dark. The path back to the hotel seemed higher, wobblier, narrower, windier, and unfamiliar. As no light was showing anywhere he had to guide himself by the faint glimmer of a not very prosperous moon seen through scudding clouds, and the phosphorescence of the sea.

Since he was a monumental flop he had no wish to encounter either Miss Boddy, Amelia, or Major Clyde again, and the sea suddenly appeared to him the most direct route home to the simpler life where he need no longer be teetotal and could shuck all responsibility.

Thus he made his way on to the beach, lurching and staggering,

but in his own opinion quite competent, reversing in his mind the flight plan of his journey thither and with what he remembered of school geography. He would turn left round Bolt Tail, strike out on a diagonal line for the Bay of Biscay, past France and Portugal, turn the corner after Cadiz and there he would be. Major Bailey would be glad to see him if no one else.

So fiery was the Gunner's internal combustion that he didn't even notice the temperature of the water that filled his shoes and sloshed around his calves as he waded in.

Fortunately at this moment Miss Constance Boddy appeared with Amelia, it being her custom to take her pet for a final duty airing on the beach before retiring for the night. The clouds at this moment obligingly parted, permitting the moon to reveal the silhouette of Gunner Lovejoy, his military uniform now comfortably dishevelled, his cap askew over one eye, hip deep in the ocean, departing for Gibraltar.

The sight filled the spinster with alarm and caused Amelia at the end of her leash to leap up and down shrieking.

" Mr. Lovejoy! " cried Miss Boddy. " What has happened? Are you ill? Where are you going? "

Lovejoy stopped in his tracks, creamy foam swirling about his thighs, to turn round and contemplate one of the two people he specifically didn't wish to see. Alcohol, sea water, Arctic winds, metabolism, hurt pride, and frustration all came to a boil. " 'Ome," he replied. " Good-bye for ever, ma'am."

The sight of the Gunner standing in the sea was so bizarre that Miss Boddy panicked and quite naturally misunderstood, believing that it was the Gunner's intention to take farewell not only from her but from life. " Mr. Lovejoy—dear Mr. Lovejoy," she cried, " you mustn't. Come back at once. Oh please do." Reaching new heights at the end of her chain, Amelia added her cries to those of her mistress.

" Come back! " repeated the Gunner scornfully, making no move to do so. " What for, I'd like to know? You and your ruddy hape! Not good enough for my Harold. What's there for me to come back for? I'm a failure. Let the side down, that's what I 'ave. They'll be pointing the finger at me: ' See that bloke there, that's Gunner Lovejoy what lost the bloomin' war for us! ' I'm going 'ome and bury meself."

The word bury set up new alarms inside the poor confused woman and she could only beg him, " Oh, Mr. Lovejoy, please dear, good, kind Mr. Lovejoy, come back, I want to talk to you."

" Ho ho! Talk to me! " echoed the Gunner, but at least he didn't go any farther out to sea. " What's there to talk about? You've made your decision, ain't you? " His voice went into that falsetto used by a drunk or a husband trying to imitate his wife's voice, " Oh no, Mr. Lovejoy, I could not let Amelia do anything like that! Gord love us, look at 'er jumping up and down there. You want to ruin 'er life and keep 'er from 'aving a fambly like yourself? "

The mixtures which Lovejoy had been imbibing at the Crown and Anchor now all took hold with a will and made him angry, so that he came sloshing out of the sea to be greeted with hysterical joy as one returned from the dead by Amelia who leapt into his arms, covering his face with kisses and caresses.

"And what about you?" shouted the Gunner at Miss Boddy, when he had managed to get his face disentangled from Amelia. "Where's your patriotism? You're British, ain't you? What about that there flag up there?" and then pointed to the roof of the hotel where there was no flag, but it didn't matter to Gunner Lovejoy who now somehow had become Major Clyde.

"Bonny England! It's a symbol, old girl, it's not 'ere you find it, but down 'ere—" and this time he hit the general region of his stomach. "You don't approve of war says you, but we're in it and the bloody 'Uns on our tails. What do you care about the Major's farm up there, wherever it is? And the geese and the kiddies walking 'and-in-'and to school, and the bloomin' train whistles. Cor, you're the one to talk, sitting out the war 'ere, living off the fat of the land while others is dodging bombs."

Miss Boddy suddenly put her hand to her face and cried, "Oh, Mr. Lovejoy, you're hurting me!"

"'Urting you," repeated the Gunner, dripping and swaying. "Look at what you've done to me."

He took a half a dozen steps forward and came closer. Miss Boddy not only looked but sniffed. "Why, Mr. Lovejoy," she cried, horrified, "you're drunk."

Lovejoy pulled himself erect proudly and said, "That's it! Got it in one. I'm drunk! Good and bloody drunk. I've lost me battle with the demon rum. The tragedy of having to go back and tell Harold there's nothing doing 'as proved too much for me. Look upon me, ma'am, I've fallen by the wayside."

And at this point the Gunner discovered that though many ingredients can be mingled with alcohol without disaster, emotion is not one of them . . . "And blimey," he added, "if I don't think I'm going to be sick." He knelt upon the moonlit sands . . .

Miss Boddy made sympathetic clucking sounds, held his head, wiped his clammy brow, and said, "Oh, poor, poor Mr. Lovejoy; come, let me help put you to bed."

Lightened and unresisting, the Gunner permitted her to guide him up to the hotel and to his room, after which he remembered no more until he awoke eleven hours later with a thundering hangover and enough of memory returning to let him know that if he hadn't ruined everything before he most certainly had now.

He rose and began throwing things into his suitcase.

An hour later he paid his bill, and slipped out of the back door so as not to encounter Miss Boddy, intending to trudge the three miles to the bus route and get the hell out of there and back to London to his punishment, whatever it should be.

But he failed to reckon with Miss Constance Boddy and the processes of mind which had kept her awake half the night. When

he reached the end of the lane from the hotel leading to the high-hedged road, there she was with Amelia on her shoulders, straddling the path, and on her face a most curious expression, which in his own surprise and anguish of mind he failed to recognise as the zealous lovelight in the eyes of the reformer who contemplates a brand to be snatched from the burning. To her, Lovejoy had been teetotal, had struggled to fight the good fight for the white flag of purity; he had proved not strong enough, he needed help.

" Mr. Lovejoy," she said, " I have been thinking over last night. I have decided to let Amelia go to Gibraltar. But, of course, I could not possibly be separated from her. I am sure you will be able to arrange for me to accompany her—and you."

The Gunner set down his suitcase and sat on it because he felt his legs would no longer support him. He passed a handkerchief over his brow while Amelia came over and hugged him.

" Gord, ma'am," he said, " do you really mean it? I can hardly believe it. It's mighty good of you." He could hardly credit that victory should thus have been snatched from total catastrophe.

" It was last night that decided me," said Miss Boddy. " It was all my fault. And after you had told me of your struggle against strong drink and the necessity from time to time of a helping hand. Yet in the hour when you needed me most, I failed you."

Some of the shine went off the Gunner's triumph. The presence of Miss Boddy in Gibraltar, monitoring his visits to the Admiral Nelson, would be disturbing. Still, if that was the only way Amelia could be got to Gibraltar, then that was how it had to be, provided he could get by Major Clyde.

But to Lovejoy's surprise, the Major found Miss Boddy's decision no obstacle. On the contrary, when the Gunner got through to him on the telephone he was both pleased and congratulatory. " Good man," he cried. " Well done, splendid show! You've saved the situation! I knew you could do it! Bravo! I'll set up the flight back at once."

The Gunner hung up in a daze.

Scruffy was brooding and nursing a large grievance made up of an accumulation of changes and things gone wrong. Life on the Rock had been charging to hell in a handbarrow. All the other apes he used to fight, bully, beat up, bite, and make love to had vanished, and in recent weeks instead of being free to go to town where he could break windows, tear up people's gardens, and foul the catchments, he had been locked up in a cage surrounded by soldiers carrying loaded guns. He did not understand this solitary confinement and, what was more, he didn't like it, and thus, had they but known it, had managed to accumulate the father of all grouches.

Although, crouched in his corner, he looked to be calm and even contemplative, he was loaded. Never a sterling character to begin with, anti-human, anti-social, and an unmitigated tyrant, all he needed was the sight of one strange monkey or one strange human

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to pull the trigger. These the British Government had now provided in the shape of Amelia and Miss Boddy.

What was wanted at that moment was one of the early nineteenth century French painters who used to perpetrate those vast canvases showing Napoleon with his generals just before the battle of Something-or-other. It had all arranged itself into that kind of tableau, Lovejoy inside the empty cage with Amelia on his shoulders, Miss Boddy a few paces from Lovejoy, and beyond at the door the anxious group of the Majors Clyde, McPherson, and Bailey, and 2nd Officer Felicity Bailey, WRNS. To complete the picture there were the two groups of soldiery, the security troops already on guard at the Battery to protect the lone surviving Barbary ape, and the other squads that had come up from the troop carrier, and for the instant they were all frozen in tense silence, waiting to see what would happen.

They didn't have long to wait. It was all over in what might be characterised as a jiffy. Hearing the noise, Scruffy turned round, and an expression crossed his ugly features more vicious and cantankerous than Tim had ever seen there before.

Whether it was the sight of a strange female perched on the shoulders of Lovejoy, or the not too attractive countenance of that female, Scruffy was across the intervening space in a blinding flash of speed, gathered up a handful of dung on the way, flung it through the bars at Amelia, squirted Lovejoy, and finished off with a record-breaking display of Magot temper, inexhaustible cursing, and bad behaviour, during which time he pelted everyone within reach with all and any garbage in the form of carrots, cabbages, and banana skins plucked from the floor of his cage.

Only Felicity, who had expected this and therefore remained calm and observant throughout, caught the final tragedy, which was that after one look at this repellent brute, Amelia fell violently and head-over-heels in love with him, and, in spite of the reception she had received and what had been thrown at her, stretched out yearning arms and chittered lovingly.

"Oh dear," said Miss Boddy, and then repeated again almost pathetically as though she could not believe what her ears and eyes told her, "oh dear, dear."

"Scruff," bawled Gunner Lovejoy, enraged by this performance to the point where he completely forgot himself, "cut that out or I'll come in there and kick your arse for you."

The shock waves of what appeared to be a thoroughly disintegrating society rolled over all of them. Miss Boddy murmured, "My poor Amelia," and held out her arms, and when her ape came to her moved out of range. Amelia, perched on her shoulder, continued to look beseechingly at the fiend in the cage. Major McPherson had his head buried in his hands as one who could no longer look, while Major Clyde had both arms upraised in the gesture reminiscent of the wicket-keeper appealing to the umpire.

But if anyone needed commiseration it was Gunner Lovejoy. Deep in his heart he had known all along that it would happen.

By now Scruffy had had a good look at Amelia perched on the shoulders of a strange female, holding out her arms to him, making kissing movements with her mouth, her eyes still further crossed with love, and his sense of injury was deepened that such a specimen should have been offered to him—to him, Scruffy, King of the Rock, who could have any girl he wanted.

He barked and coughed with rage. He spat. He bounced up and down on all fours. He combed his area for ammunition to hurl. He leapt on to the side of the cage, bared his yellow canines, and shook the wire-netting so that the entire structure rattled and clattered.

Miss Boddy was not only appalled by the behaviour of one who had been held out to her as a paragon and a saint, but disappointed as well in the human species. She had grown truly fond of Mr. Lovejoy and his stories, and to have him thus exposed as a shameless prevaricator was almost more than she could bear. And what was really so awful for all of them was that her gentleness was never for an instant diminished.

"Oh no," she murmured, "no, no. I am afraid I could never permit Amelia to associate with such a creature. Quite impossible." She turned her reproachful eyes upon the Gunner.

"I am afraid that you have told me a number of falsehoods for your own ends, Mr. Lovejoy. That was unkind. I trusted you."

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than flesh and blood and Gunner Lovejoy could stand. He would not have cared to have been made the mug in private by his superiors for their own shortcomings—this was after all the accepted lot of every ranker—but not before Miss Boddy. For the second time that day the Gunner forgot himself.

"It was 'im," he cried, pointing an accusing finger at Major Clyde. "He made me. I never wanted to do it, but 'e's got the crowns on his shoulders and what's a man to do? Who gave me the photo to give to you? Who filled me up with a bellyful of psychology or whatever he called it? It was *'im* put me up to it."

All eyes were now focused upon Major Clyde who, under the accusing finger of the indignant Gunner, suddenly looked exactly as he had thirty years before when hauled up on the carpet before the headmaster. And for the first time in his military career as a clever and competent organiser and administrator of an intelligence branch, the Major felt himself thoroughly discombobulated. This was one of the effects of Miss Boddy's innocence against which all normal human standards of behaviour seemed to shatter.

In his cage, and now out of things to throw, Scruffy bounced up and down on all fours in a gleeful rage and continued to do so until his visitors had departed and the riflemen once more took up their sentry positions round his cage. From his point of view it had been the first thoroughly satisfactory morning in a long, long time.

No one was more surprised than Miss Boddy, engaged in the last rites of assembling her possessions, when the telephone rang in her hotel room and the receptionist announced, "There's a soldier—I beg your pardon, a Bombardier Lovejoy downstairs to see you."

The name brought a most strange pang of pain to the heart of Miss Boddy, and for a moment she had contemplated an excuse to avoid seeing him. But then her innate kindness rejected this and she had agreed to go down.

In the lobby had waited an embarrassed recently-promoted Lovejoy, even more brushed and spruced than he had been on the fateful expedition to the apes' village the day before. His cap was tucked under one arm, a fixative applied to his hair so that every grain and wisp was in place, his boots were twin mirrors, and in one sweating hand was clutched a wrapped bouquet, open at one end, of red roses.

When Miss Boddy had emerged from the lift he had moved towards her with the uncertain tread of one proceeding to his execution, gulped and declared, "I came to say good-bye."

He had then stood there quite petrified and it became evident to Miss Boddy he had something more to say than just good-bye.

When they were seated, the Bombardier still clinging desperately to his cap in one hand and the flowers in the other, Miss Boddy asked, "Would you like something to drink?"

"Gord," said Lovejoy from the very bottom of his being, "would I?"

"Then I'll order tea," Miss Boddy said, and did so forthwith.

It had not been what the Bombardier had in mind, but it was strong when it arrived and its tannin content did supply the minimum of stimulant needed to settle Lovejoy's nerves.

"I have come to apologise," he said. "That was a rotten dirty thing I done."

The heart within Miss Boddy was as soft and cushiony as her exterior. "That's quite all right, Mr. Lovejoy," she said. "You were only carrying out the orders of your superiors."

There was a silence while she poured a second cup of tea.

"You'll be off in the morning, I expect," Lovejoy opened.

"Yes."

"That's a good aircraft, the Handley, you're flying in. You'll be safe as a rock," the Bombardier assured her, using perhaps not the happiest metaphor. "I wish you wasn't going," he added.

"Really? That's kind of you to say so." Miss Boddy was regarding the soldier curiously through the lenses of her gold-rimmed spectacles as she sat, a teacup poised in one hand, her little finger elegantly crooked, and a chocolate-cream biscuit in the other. Yet something other than curiosity impelled her to ask, "Why?"

The Bombardier had got himself forward to the edge of his chair. He too had his teacup in one hand, the other was still clutching the undelivered bouquet of roses. "Oh, I don't know," he replied. "I just wish as how you weren't."

Miss Boddy thought she had read him. Men after all were all alike, and particularly men in war. For whatever the reason or cause, they wanted their way.

"Everyone has been at me to make me stay," Miss Boddy said with some sadness. "All those officers and even that sweet child, Felicity, married to one of them. All they care about is to get what they want. And I suppose you too, Mr. Lovejoy."

"No," Lovejoy heard himself say to his utter horror, "I'd miss you after you were gone and that's a fact."

Something in his tone disarmed Miss Boddy for a moment. "Would you really, Mr. Lovejoy? No one has ever said that to me before."

"Ma'am, I would, so help me, and I never thought that John C. Lovejoy would be saying that to any woman. Couldn't you perhaps stay, ma'am?"

Miss Boddy shook her head. "Our home is in England," she said.

"But couldn't you make your home here with me?" Lovejoy pleaded. "Look how Amelia gets on with me," and again the Bombardier felt both thrill and shock at the sound of his own words.

Miss Boddy couldn't keep the astonishment out of her voice even while she felt her heart suddenly accelerating. "Did you say make our home with you, Mr. Lovejoy?" she asked.

He had not wanted to say it, but he had, and now his head was nodding in silent assent to the question.

A new and cold suspicion suddenly chilled the sweet warmth that for a moment had flooded Miss Boddy. " Mr. Lovejoy," she asked, " are you by any chance asking me to marry you? "

Bombardier Lovejoy's mind silently dictated the reply, Me marry? Never in a million years. His heart, however, translated it into a simply spoken, " Yes, ma'am, please, if you would."

" Mr. Lovejoy," said Miss Boddy, and only a woman would have been able to detect the quiet misery and pain in her voice, " did they send you here to do this to me? To ask me to marry you to keep me and Amelia here? "

It was now the turn of Lovejoy to be filled with dismay at this evidence of how misunderstanding, suspicion, and exigency can distort and twist an honest emotion. " What? " he cried. " The likes of them, a lot of bleeding orficers force me to put my head in the noose? Not—" he caught the naughty word just in time and swallowed it— " likely."

" Then why, why? " asked Miss Boddy, and now her own internal anguish lent vehemence to her query. " I am a weak and perhaps silly woman, Mr. Lovejoy, and unused to the ways of the world, but don't take me for a fool. It is because of Amelia—"

Lovejoy looked stunned at this outburst and repeated, " Take you for a fool, ma'am? No one would ever do that."

" Then why have you tried to make me one by asking me to marry you? "

" Ma'am," he articulated miserably, " I just 'aven't the words! Can't you *see?* "

Miss Boddy peered at him and did see . . .

" Ma'am," pleaded Bombardier Lovejoy, " do you want to send me back to my old ways? Drink and lord knows what? You've had me straightened out. I haven't had a Monkey Juice since I've been back. It's hard for me to do it alone."

There was never a stranger love declaration, or in this instance one more calculated to affect the one to whom it was addressed . . . The force of Lovejoy's argument, the lightning-like revelation that had come to her, plus the affection she felt for this stray of the world so like herself, and who had truly characterised himself as a lonely man, had thrown her into a state of confusion.

" Oh, Mr. Lovejoy," she cried, " I just don't know what to say." Then she set down her teacup and biscuit, rose, and ran for the lift, which providentially had descended and opened its door just as she arrived. The door closed again and she vanished.

Bombardier Lovejoy sighed and rose, brushing the crumbs from his lap. He called for the bill and paid the 2s. 6d. with a 6d. tip for the tea and walked through the lounge to the lobby, and only when he reached there was he aware that he was still holding on to the bouquet of roses, so tightly that several thorns had come through the paper and pierced his palm. But he didn't feel it.

His feet were carrying him down the steps to the exit when a page caught up with him and said, " Bombardier Lovejoy? You are wanted on the telephone."

He went into the booth and picked up the receiver. He supposed Tim or Major Clyde had somehow traced him to the hotel, and automatically he said, "Bombardier Lovejoy here."

But it was not Tim or the Major; the voice at the other end was that of Miss Constance Boddy. She said, "John?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"*If—if you want me to, still, I will.*" Then before he could reply, the phone was put down.

Lovejoy in his turn set down the receiver. He left the booth in a daze, still clutching his bouquet. He was aware suddenly that he was inordinately happy . . .

The telephone rang in the Fortress H.Q. office. Major McPherson picked it up and said, "Oh hullo, Tim," when the speaker identified himself. "Yes, just a moment." He passed the instrument over to Major Clyde saying, "It's for you, Slinker. Tim Bailey."

"You can cancel the passengers for tomorrow's flight—the Handley Page going to London," said Tim's voice.

"What! You mean the old girl and that crosseyed she-ape have changed their minds?"

"That's it."

"I can't believe it. Who persuaded her?"

"Lovejoy."

"Good God," said the Major, "there's a man. I'll see that he gets the George Medal for this. How did he do it?"

"He's going to marry her."

"What!" yelled the Major.

"I said he's going to marry her. They've fixed it up."

"In that case, it's nothing else than a V.C. And talk about a man sacrificing himself for his country over and above the line of duty . . ."

The diaphragm of the telephone instrument rattled.

"Good grief," said the Major. "Did you say love?"

"Love," the instrument reiterated.

The Major looked at it for a moment and then said to McPherson, "He said it's love."

"O.K.," McPherson replied. "Give him mine too."

"No no, you don't understand," Major Clyde said. "It's Lovejoy. Lovejoy is asking for a sergeant's married quarters."

"But I haven't told you the best piece of news yet," Tim said. "She's withdrawn her objections to Amelia and Scruffy."

A kind of tremolo came into the Major's voice as he said, "History will remember this."

"What, what?" said Tim. "What's that?"

"Turning point of the war," said Major Clyde and hung up.

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The enthralling climax of Scruffy by Paul Gallico in next month's Argosy, on sale May 10

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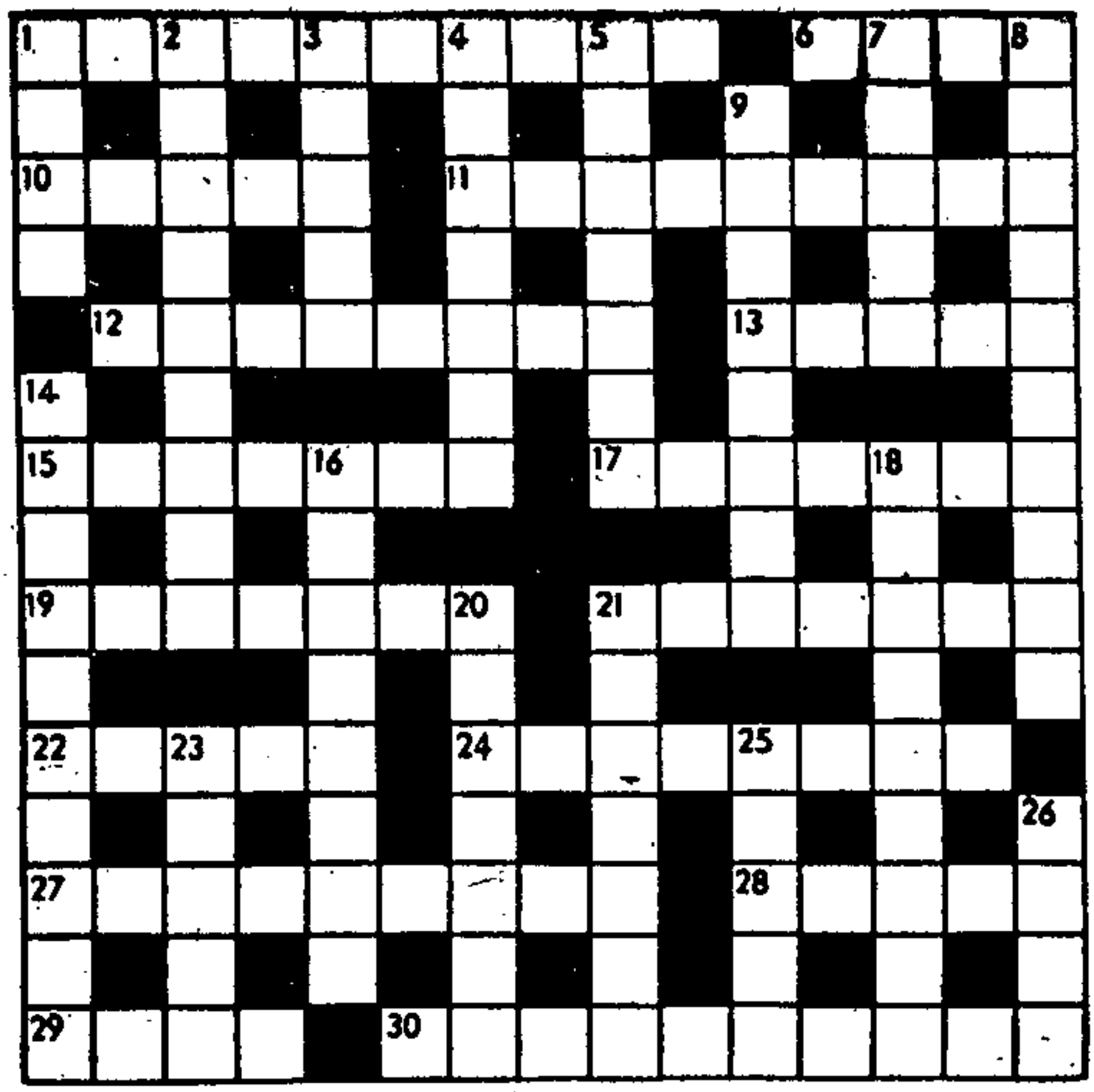
Solution on page 36



ACROSS

1 Life in the raw? (4, 6).

6 "Tell me where is fancy——"(The Merchant of Venice) (4).

10 Place isn't an insect to a T (5).

11 A type error in this kind of theatre (9).

12 Sideways over the brainy brink (8).

13 Pathway for yes-men —and women? (5).

15 New identities for old (7).

17 Of mice and men? (7).

19 An inflation that can suddenly go bang (7).

21 Inquiring type (7).

22 Palindromic locating device (5).

24 Munch a charged particle; it's A1 (8).

27 English capitalists? (9).

28 This bed is cosier with the top off (5).

29 Trio mixed up in rebellion (4).

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3 Yarn—from France (5).

4 Five were foolish (7).

5 Could be Big Brother's boys? (7).

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8 Dancing's thirsty work, but provides the right amount of corn, perhaps (3,7).

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18 French name on record backed; Ian ends up an Easterner (9).

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21 Groups of a hundred maidens? (7).

23 Broken-in dog is wild! (5).

25 Mr. Capron gets the point (5).

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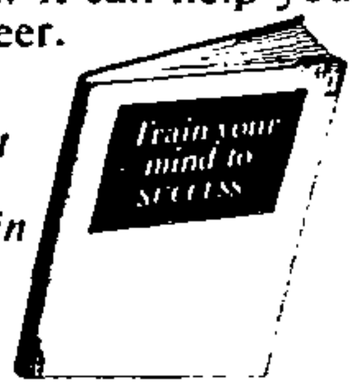

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